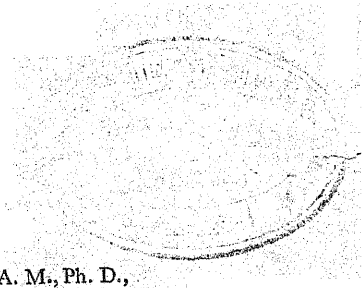
RISE AND FALL
OF THE POLIGARS OF TAMILNADU



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PREFACE

The present work entitled " Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu" is based upon my research in the libraries and archives of South India. It furnishes the history of these auxiliary powers, as given as the Sir William Meyer Endowment Lectures at the University of Madras on the 18th, 19th and 20th of October, 1972.

The poligars represented an influential institution in the polity of Tamilnadu of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. They emerged as a powerful factor under the Vijayanagar Empire, flourished or struggled through until they vanished from the stage of history under the impact of the collapse of the South Indian Rebellion of 1801.

The work is divided into five chapters, based upon a chronological approach to the study. The rise of the poligars, the working of the system, their relations with the ruling powers and the dissolution of the system are examined in adequate detail.

The Vice Chancellor and Syndicate of the University of Madras had inivted me to deliver these lectures under the Sir William Meyer Endowment, 1971-1972. Professor V. A. Devasenapathi of University of Madras took keen interest in promoting an early publication of them. I convey to them my feelings of gratitude. The Avvai Achukkoodam, the noted printers at Madras, have undertaken the printing of this work and executed it excellently. My thanks are due to them.

Madurai,
1—2—1974

K. RAJAYYAN

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to assert with exactitude when the medieval period in the history of South India began and when it ended. The historian may not conclude that it began in 1311 when the Afghans wrought destruction in the country and that it ended in 1801 when the English established their sway. For, it was during this period that the Empire of Vijayanagar flourished, that Tamilnadu enjoyed a period of order under the Nayaks, that the Marathas gained their ascendancy, that Mysore emerged to prominence, that the Carnatic won political unity, that Venad created Travancore and that the European powers opened the region for western trade. Yet if the disorders that came in the wake of the rise and fall of dynasties, the disturbances caused by foreign invasions and the neglect of art and culture are taken into consideration, it must be admitted that the period covered by these developments from 1311 to 1801 by and large represented the middle ages in South India. As in Europe, there existed a form of feudalism too and it was the poligari system. In fact the period from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century was the age of the poligars in South India.

The South Indian polity of this period was marked by a three tier system. At the summit there came the princely order. This was furnished by the rulers of territories like the Nawab of the Carnatic. the Rajahs of Mysore and Thanjavur or the Nizam of Hyderabad. Second in order there came the auxiliary powers called the poligars, zamindars and jagirdars. Third in the order there came the village communities all over the country. In general the rulers considered defence and revenue as their primary responsibility, the auxiliary powers preserved law and order, while the village communities promoted social welfare and local administration. There existed a reciprocity of interests between the poligars and the village communities.

The chieftains drew their recruits to their civil and military establishments from the villages, while the local communities sought protection of the poligars against robbers, tyrants and invaders.

Poligar or palayakkaran was the holder of a territory, called palayam in Tamil, palamu in Telugu and pollam in English, which meant literally an armed camp. It was a strip of territory consisting of a few villages, granted to a chieftain in consideration of the military service, that he agreed to render and the tribute that he consented to pay to the sovereign. However if the circumstances so warranted and if their attitude so developed, they performed less of their duties and exercised more of the powers. Because of their numerical strength, extensive resources, local influence and independent attitude these auxiliary powers represented a powerful order in the political system of South India.

As a political agency, the poligar system was associated with medieval South India Tamilnadu and Andhradesa accounted for most of the poligars. In the English records the poligars of Tamilnadu were referred to as the Southern Poligars while those of Rayalaseema as Western Poligars and those of Coastal Andhra as Northern Poligars. The Southern Poligars were concentrated in Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madurai, Dindigul and Tiruchirapalli. Much of the territories in the southern region of Tamilnadu belonged to these auxiliary powers. While the territory held by the rulers was called circar territory, that held by these chieftains was called policar territory. At times the chieftains extended their jurisdiction to the villages in the circar country too.

The original sources, which have a direct bearing on the history of the poligars, are very limited. Inscriptions make isolated references to these chieftains and the endowments made by them. Traditions and ballads often refer to the origin and exploits of the poligar dynasties but the accounts furnished by them are generally so exaggerated that they seek to glorify whatever they did. To this category belong the Panjalamkurichi Azhivu Charithira Kummi, Sivagangai Seemai and Uthumalai Palayapettu. Historical accounts of individual palayams would have added to the diversity of the data, but for want of them much of the details of internal developments had passed into oblivion. The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai too makes isolated refe-

rences about the chieftains, particularly of the Tiruchirapalli region. The lists of the chieftains given in it are of considerable assistance for study. The Persian Records of the Nawab of Arcot make note of the circar's relations with the auxiliary powers but the accounts are by no means complete. However much of the material is to be found in the official records of the English East India Company. The English assisted the rulers in undertaking a series of expeditions against the chieftains. Subsequently, when they gained the ascendancy in the country they displayed a keen interest in the effective suppression of the chieftains and the reform of the entire system. As such their records, particularly of the category of Military Consultations, Military Country Correspondence, Military Despatches, Revenue Consulations, Revenue Despatches and Public Consulations furnish most of the needed material. As a rival power, the English treated the poligars as their inveterate enemies and allowed to reflect their spirit of hostility in their accounts. They were not free from the tendency to reduce historical truth to subservience to administrative expediency. Therefore adequate margin is to be given for prejudice in the deduction of data from their records. Among the secondary sources no work seems to have so far made an attempt to study the history of the poligars. Yet it cannot be denied that a few published works deal to a much limited extent with one aspect or other of the history of these chieftains. Among them are to be mentioned *Vikramasimhapuri Mandalasarvasvamu* of Chandrasekhara Reddi, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul* of B. S. Ward, *History of the Nayaks of Madura* of R. Sathiyanatha Aiyar and *A General History of the Pudukkottai State* of S. Radhakrishna Ayyar. A critical analysis and a comparative study of these different sources are essential for corroboration of evidences, assessment of the working of the system and an analysis of the developments in which the auxiliary powers had their role.

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CHAPTER I

RISE OF THE POLIGARS

The poligars of Tamilnadu as in other regions of South India appeared on the political scene neither suddenly nor spontaneously. They came into existence gradually through stages and as the result of an interplay of historical circumstances and political considerations. As such they represented not only the product of the system of the age but also its corrective. They lived and flourished so long as the same situation that gave rise to them prevailed but declined and vanished when a new order came.

Since the dawn of the fourteenth century A.D. anarchy and disorder of formidable proportions engulfed the country. The Pandyas and the Cholas, who bestowed upon the country peace and prosperity for long and carried the pioneering flag of imperialism far and wide, ceased to be political forces. Alien powers moved into their place in strength. No more was Tamilnadu either the citadel of freedom or the homeland of empires. Agriculture, manufacture and commerce suffered an eclipse and together with them did economic prosperity, cultural advancement and political tranquillity.

Advent and exit of foreign powers and rise and fall of empires caused frequent changes in the country. Taking advantage of a civil war in the Pandya kingdom, the Afghan army under the command of Malik Kafur sacked Madurai and plundered Rameswaram in 1311. On his departure from the far south, he left behind him a Khilji regime at Madurai but it fell in the wake of the collapse of the Khilji Sultanate at Delhi. The Tughlaks who appeared in the south by 1323

completed the conquest of the Chola and Pandya territories.[1] In 1335 Jalal-ud-din Hassan, the Tughlak Governor of Ma'bar, as the southern most province was called, organised the independent Sultanate of Madurai. After a precarious existence for nearly half a century if fell to the onslaught of local powers, led by Kumara Kampana. The Rayas of Vijayanagar extended their sway to the Tamil country but they too encountered formidable resistance from a combination of chieftains.[2] The collapse of the established order, the constant presence of the threat of foreign invasions, the independent spirit of the inhabitants and the inability of the new sovereigns to assert their authority in overwhelming strength created a situation favourable for the rise of the poligari system.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the country was dotted with numerous palayams. However most of them were concentrated in Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, Dindugal and Coimbatore. Among them were large ones like Sivaganga or Pudukkottai and small ones like Kolarpatti and Dhili. The resources of the territories decided the political status of the respective poligars. The chieftains of western Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram were mostly of Marava community, those of Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur were of Kallar tribes and those of eastern Tirunelveli, Dindugal and Coimbatore were Nayaks or Totiens. They spoke either Tamil or Telugu or both. The number of poligars varied from time to time yet it does not appear that their strength exceeded a hundred at any time. Early in the Nayak period it is believed that there were about seventy two poligars in Madurai country alone, while a few others came into existence in Tamilnadu under the Muslim administration. In 1752 their strength was indicated as about sixty.[3] By the end of the eighteenth century the number of the palayams in the Carnatic region was placed in treaty records at fortysix.[4] Creation of new palayams and sequestration of old ones by the rulers caused frequent fluctuations in the strength of the poligars. The annexations as well as alienations, made by the poligars, too had contributed to this trend. Sivagiri, Wadagara,

1. R. C. Majumdar, (ed) *The Delhi Sultanate*, 1960, pp. 53 & 279.
3. Military Country Correspondence, 20 Jan. 1752, Vol. 1 p. 74.
4. Revenue Consultations, Madras, 23 July, 1802 Vol. 118 pp. 2463-64.

Natham, Melur, Pudukkottai, Manaparai, Wodayarpalayam, Ariyalur, Turaiyur and Virupakshi represented the most important of the palayams. In the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai and Ramanathapuram hardly any territory belonged to the circar.[5]

Poligars and the Nayaks

After sustaining reverses in sporadic attempts of the early period, the sovereigns of Vijayanagar asserted their sway over Tamilnadu early in the sixteenth century. Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1530) the greatest of the Emperors of Vijayanagar, determined to consolidate his authority over this territory, appointed his able general, Visvanatha Nayak, as administrator with Madurai as headquarters. The new governor found the situation so complicated and his task so formidable as to warrant an unconventional approach.

In the country there were two classes of leaders: (1) the traditional chieftains, who descended from the royal houses of the past and wielded considerable influence among the people and (2) the feudatories who owed their loyalty to the fallen sovereigns and lived in a state of independence. To the first order belonged the Pandya and Chola princes. In consequence of the absorption of Madurai within the political limits of the Delhi Sultanate, the Pandyas withdrew to Tenkasi and spearheaded a struggle aimed at political liberation. To counter the Pandyan endeavour for attaining independence, the Afghan rulers planted Chola princes, called Mavali chiefs, at Manamadurai and other territories. Between the Pandyas and the Cholas, was shared much of the loyalty of the inhabitants.[6] Next in order came the auxiliary powers. Many of them claimed authority from divine right or royal concession, obtained as favour or in return for signal services. In Ramanathapuram the setupati claimed himself as the guardian of the causeway to Rameswaram, the famous temple to which pilgrims flocked all over from India. He considered it his prerogative to afford protection to the pilgrims against the robbers, who infested the nearby jungles. According to tradition Lord Sri Rama during his exploits in South India entrusted this responsibility

5. B. S. Ward, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, Vol. 3 p. 61.

6. R. Sathyanatha Aiyer, *History of the Nayaks of Madura.* 1924 pp. 5-7.

with the setupati. However, the early line of the setupatis became extinct by the sixteenth century. Yet some of the descendants, who commanded local influence, decided to reassert their authority, taking advantage of the collapse of the Pandya Empire.[7] Marudappa Tevar of Uthumalai traced his descent from a warrior, who was stated to have sprung from the side of Goddess Minakshi with clubs in his hands to assist her in the wars against the rebels of Madurai. Because of his daring exploits during his service under Vadamalayappa Pillayan, the Pandian Governor of Tirunelveli, a rebellion in Tenkasi was suppressed. In return for this service he gained from the Pandyas the possession of Uthumalai.[8] Apadhurhara Tevar at the orders of the Pandyan ruler, Ugra Pandya Rajah, routed a Kannada army that advanced to the plains. He founded the authority of his family at Singampatti, given in reward.[9] Kumara Ettappa Nayakkar undertook an expedition to Iramil at the direction of the Pandyan king. He was hit by an arrow from an unknown foe, while he was returning after defeating the enemy. In 1584 he was granted Kalugumalai as blood money.[10] According to tradition Ketti Pommu or clever Pommu, who founded the Kattabomman line of chiefs at Panjalamkurichi, served under the Pandyas and gained from them the possession of that territory. In fact when the Nayaks reached Tamilnadu, there had already existed a class of chieftains, who drew their influence from the possession of the territories, that they inherited or acquired.

V. Rangacharya in *Indian Antiquary*, R. Sathyanatha Aiyar in his *History of the Nayaks of Madura* and S. Radhakrishna Ayyar in his *A General History of the Pudukkottai State* make references to the organisation of the poligari system by Visvanatha Nayak. It is not very correct to assert that the rulers of Vijayanagar created the system. What they really did was to accept a situation that had already existed, partly because of their inability to change it and partly because of the advantages it offered and to put it into a definite form. The Nayak chief, after assuming the administration of the Tamil territories, marched to Tiruchirapalli, strengthened its fortifications, cleared

7. Ibid, p. 212.
8. Memoir Showing the Origin of the Caste and Family of the Zamindarini of the Estate of Uthumalai, para 2 5.
9. History of the Singampatti Zamindari (trans. from a Telugu record).
10. Family History of Ettayapuram (Tamil).

the jungles on either bank of the Kaveri and suppressed the robber gangs, who found asylum in the area. At his direction his general, Ariyanatha led an expedition to Tirunelveli. However the task of consolidation of Nayak authority faced insuperable odds. The chieftains who called themselves as 'Pancha Pandyas', believed to be the tributaries of the Pandyas, refused to accept any earthly superior. They assembled an army and entrenched themselves at a place referred to as Kayattattur, ready to fight out the issue. The local tradition at Panchalamkurichi indicates that the Pancha Pandyas took their stand at a kurichi or a valley between two hills and hence the name of that place. Therefore it is likely that Kayattattur was Kayattar, situated near Panchalamkurichi. This development threatened to give the signal to the outbreak of a formidable conflagration throughout the country. As Sathyanatha Aiyar has rightly asserted, the Pandyas, legitimate and illegitimate, frequently mutually questioning each other's legitimacy, held their sway over different territories. It seemed certain that they would unite under a common banner to fight the common enemy. The troops of Travancore and the robbers who made the jungle tracts of the west their habitat waited for opportunities for making irruptions into the plains. The attitude of the Portuguese, who exercised an overwhelming influence over the Paravas and independent authority over the coastal region, served as a source of constant concern. The Bahmini Sultanates, particularly Bijapur and Golconda, concentrated their forces against the vulnerable frontiers in the north. The rulers of Kalinga too were hostile. So great was the magnitude of these perils that it appeared as nothing but impolitic to provoke the chieftains of Tamilnadu to raise the banner of resistance. In the meantime the generals who were serving the empire through changing fortunes clamoured for territorial rewards. Guided by these considerations, Visvanatha Nayak saw the wisdom of effecting a settlement that would pacify the chieftains and serve the needs of the times. The result was the acceptance of the poligari system. As this reform was of considerable political importance, it appears that he implemented it with the approval of Achyuta Raya, Emperor of Vijayanagar.

The Nayaks associated the poligars with the administration and defined their rights and duties. The chronicles indicate that Visvanatha Nayak gave recognition to seventy two palayams and entrusted

the defence of each of the seventy two bastions of the Fort of Madurai with a particular poligar. Normally the chieftains gained possession of their districts either through inheritance from the ruling houses of the past or by their military might or in recognition of their distinguished service to the state. The Nayaks permitted these chieftains to retain possession of the same territories or granted them the possession of other territories. The poligars were allowed to collect the taxes and required to pay one third of the collections as tribute to the sovereign, to maintain such number of troops as could be supported with one third of the revenue, and to retain the rest for their private expenses. They were directed to render military service to the sovereign, whenever it was demanded and to administer justice to their people. This arrangement, important in itself, accorded legal sanction to the poligari system rather than creating something new and left the chieftains as masters of their territories, with fixed rights and duties. They received generous remissions in their payments and grant of more villages, in return for devoted service to the state. The settlement fulfilled two major objectives of the government: firstly, it provided for the administration of the poligar territories and secondly, it created a second line of defence, indispensable during this period of anarchy and disorder.'[11]

The period that followed witnessed the emergence of more of the poligars. The Sultans of Golconda and the Nizams of Hyderabad found in the poligari system a convenient agency for tackling many of the problems that they faced in the conquered territories in the far south. Not only did they accept the system but find it expedient to expand it. They created new palayams and granted them to their servants in recognition of meritorious service or in compensation for the protection of the properties of the circar, villagers, travellers and pilgrims. This accounted for the rise of several poligars in the Arcot region.'[12] The poligars held possession of their territories on a hereditary basis, with right to alienate any portion there of at any time. In subsequent times the Nawabs of Arcot created a class of chieftains with or without right to enjoy possession of estates on a hereditary basis or to alienate any part of them. However these chieftains were not treated as equal in status with the poligars.

11. R. Sathyanatha Aiyer, *History of the Nayaks of Madura* p. 58.

In short what the Nayaks proceeded to do was to accord recognition to a historical phenomenon created by the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the ruling houses of the Tamil country. The eclipse of the old royal houses with the rise of new powers left in its wake numerous chieftains in possession of territories of reduced extent. In the meantime adventurers gathered armed gangs and asserted their power in different areas taking advantage of the disorders of the times. The followers and favourites of the new aggressors obtained from their lords concessions in land in reward of their service or sacrifice. Apart from these, the rulers found it necessary to assign lands to chieftains as compensation for the services, that they continued to render. Thus a four fold process, as an ultimate analysis would indicate, contributed to the rise of the poligars. They were: (1) descent from royal houses (2) assertion of authority in command of armed followers—in these cases the chieftains obtained the recognition of the sovereign. (3) acknowledgment granted for a distinguished public service and (4) the need to protect public interests—in these cases they owed their existence to a deliberate act of the sovereign. However it is difficult to tell that a particular poligar owed his existence to one particular cause or the other. While the early poligars gained more of rights through service to the rulers, the later chieftains took advantages of the turmoils to attain the status of early poligars. In fact a combination of different factors contributed in one way or the other to the emergence of the poligars into a powerful political institution.

The Later Poligars

The military discomfiture suffered at the hands of the Bahmini Sultanates on the field at Talikota in 1565 started the steady decline of the Vijayanagar Empire. The Nayaks of Madurai and Thanjavur asserted their independence but their endeavour to save the country from disorders proved futile. There came more of external aggressions and internal conflicts. The later rulers of Vijayanagar embarked upon a course of warlike action with an ambition not only to regain the lost ground but also to reassert their waning authority over the provinces. They carried the war to the Tamil country too. Mysore,

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12. Chandrasekhara Reddi, Vikramasimhapuri Mandalasaraswamu pp. 85-8

Madurai and Thanjavur in the mean time entered into a three cornered rivalry for political supremacy. To add to the embarrassments, the Deccani powers, the Marathas and the Mysoreans made frequent inroads into the Tamil country. As the prospect of political stabilisation vanished, the Nayaks looked upon the local chieftains not only for support to carry on their own administration but also for assistance to check aggressions. The family records of the poligars and other chieftains furnish numerous instances of their exploits in support of the Nayaks to check foreign invasions and to suppress the defiant powers. These developments forced the Nayaks to make additions to the existing palayams and to create new ones either to provide for new situations or to accommodate the new chieftains.

The number of new palayams that came into existence under the later Nayaks cannot be ascertained. However the most significant of them were the Marava and Kallar palayams. The territorial extent and economic resources of these palayams were so considerable when compared with the ordinary estates, that they were often called as states and their rulers as rajahs.[13]

The Nayaks entrusted the administration of Ramanathapuram with two commissioners, but found it impossible either to offord effective protection to the pilgrims going to Rameswaram or to hold the Portuguese under check. Therefore Muthu Krishnappa Nayak (1601-1609) of Madurai decided to appoint a chief acceptable to the inhabitants to carry into effect the reorganisation of the administration. The person whom he selected for this difficult job was Sadaikka Tevar, who belonged to the line of the setupatis. Appointed as deputy in 1604, Sadaikka Tevar subdued the turbulent chiefs, established military posts along the road from Madurai to Rameswaram, provided escorts to the pilgrims and restored order. As the Nayaks grew into prominence in the service of the Rayas of Vijayanagar, the setupatis gained in their power in the service of the Nayaks of Madurai.[14] Raghunatha Setupati, at the orders of Tirumala Nayak (1623-1659), fought and repulsed a Muslim invasion and suppressed a rebellion organised by the poligars of Tirunelveli. As reward for this service,

13. William Taylor, Oriental Historical Manuscripts, 1857, pp. 161-163.
14. R. Sathyanatha Aiyer, *History of the Nayaks of Madura.* pp. 90-91.

he received the villages near Mannarkovil and a share in the revenue from the pearl fishery at Tutukudi. However when Chokkanatha Nayak came to power, (1659-1682), Raghunatha Setupati disregarded the central authority and refused co-operation in resisting a Muslim aggression. In retaliation the Nayak troops invaded Ramanathapuram, but could gain no decisive victory. In 1702 Rani Mangammal sent another expedition, but the Marava forces rounded the Madurai army. In the same year the old Raghunatha Setupati, who was also called Kizhavan, declared the independence of the Marava territory. The new state of Ramanathapuram extended from the sea in the east to within six miles of Madurai in the west and from River Vypar in the south to Thanjavur kingdom in the north.[15]

A territorial grant made by Kizhavan Setupati contributed to the formation of Pudukkottai. As a young man, he fell in love with Kathali, a girl of the Kallar tribe, and married her. He granted possession of a tract of territory to Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman, the brother of the girl. Raghunatha Raya (1686-1730) built the town of Pudukkottai, annexed the neighbouring palayams and asserted his independence by 1711. This marked the establishment of the Tondaiman dynasty of Pudukkottai. Adjoining this state were the tribal regions of Melur and Natham. Ruled by tribal councils, they were in fact commonwealths of wild tribes. They had no hereditary chieftains and they paid no regular tribute to any sovereign. Inhabited by the warlike and independent Kallar tribes, the three districts, Pudukkottai, Melur and Natham, constituted what was called Kallarnadu.[16]

A second territorial concession made by Kizhavan Setupati to Periya Wodaya Tevar, a local chieftain, for maintaining 300 armed men for the service of the central authority served as the nucleus of the state of Sivaganga. Sasivarna Tevar, who succeeded Periya Wodaya Tevar, married an illegitimate daughter of Kizhavan Setupati and gained possession of more of the villages from Ramanathapuram, adequate to maintain 3000 armed men.[17] As the setupatis grew in strength through service to the Nayaks, so did the Sivaganga princes to

15. Ibid, p. 212.
16. S. Radhakrishna Ayyar, *History of Pudukkottai*, 1916, pp. 125-127.
17. K. Annaswamy Ayyer, The Sivaganga Zamindary, 1899, pp. 1-3.

the setupatis. A young man of enterprise, Sasivarna Tevar ably assisted Setupati Kattaya Tevar (1723-1734) in beating an expedition, which the Marathas of Thanjavur sent and advanced right up to the capital of Ramanathapuram. In acknowledgement of this important service, the Setupati divided his territory into five equal parts, retained three divisions in the south for himself and ceded the rest to Sasivarna Tever. This marked the rise of two states within the territorial bounds of Ramanathapuram. Inhabited by the people belonging to the Marava community, the larger of the two was called Greater Marawar and the smaller, Lesser Marawar.[18]

The Marawa powers present a striking paradox in the history of the poligars. To begin with Ramanathapuram was a palayam, constituted by the Nayaks. It paid tribute and rendered military service to Madurai. But when the influence of Ramanathapuram was on the ascendancy, the authority of Madurai was on the decline. This enabled the Marawars to establish their independence. Having achieved this, they created new palayams within their territory. If the break away of the territory were a factor in the decline of Madurai, the loss of Pudukkottai and Sivaganga was equally a factor in the decline of Ramanathapuram. Despite the assertion of independence, the Nawabs of Arcot when they extended their authority to the far south, considered the Marawa and Kallar powers not as states but only as palayams.

Unlike the ordinary poligars, the Rajah of Travancore had a dual status. He was the poligar under the Nayaks of Madurai and subsequently under the Nawabs of Arcot so far his possession of Kanyakumari or Kalakkad was concerned but was a sovereign by himself in regard to his authority over other territories on the west coast. Mohammad Ali claimed the Rajah of Mysore and the King of Jaffna as his poligars, but he exercised no authority over them. He sought to enlist British support for the enforcement of his claims but with no purpose.

Aggressions and Disorders

The Nayak powers, to whom the poligars extended their loyalty traditionally, declined in their influence by the end of the seventeenth

18. Military Consultations, Madras, 3 Feb. 1771, vol. 41 p. 108.

century. The advent and exit of aggressive powers in quick succession together with internal dissensions among the Nayaks presented stresses and strains to the political system of Tamilnadu. The poligari system too experienced the consequent vicissitudes in its fortune. Frequently assailed from different quarters, the chieftains strained their resources to defend their traditional rights. Their effort to maintain the declining Nayaks in power headed towards an inevitable fiasco. Repeatedly the foreign invaders administered upon them devastating blows and subjected them to shattering experiences. These developments threw them into a quandary—whether to surrender to alien exaction and humiliation or to resist and assert their independence. As circumstances warranted they relied upon one course or the other, but generally the second. Not only did they survive the long chain of perils but greatly did they consolidate their strength.

By 1670 Mysore occupied Coimbatore and Salem, the north western provinces of Madurai. Consequently, the poligars in this region passed under the control of the rulers of Mysore. In 1674 Ekoji, the Maratha adventurer and half brother of Sivaji, occupied Thanjavur from the Nayaks. Two years later Sivaji at the command of 30,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry undertook his brilliant campaign to the Carnatic. He occupied Ginji from Bijapur, advanced to Thanjavur and routed a combination of the poligars of Chittur and Vellore. Rustom Khan, a Muslim adventurer, sought to establish his authority at Tiruchirapalli and to expel the Nayaks. But his daring bid was thwarted by the timely intervention of the poligars. The Setupati of Ramanathapuram and Chinna Katiri Nayak of Kannivadi gained the support of the followers of the usurper, entered into a collusion with them, killed Rustom Khan and re-established Chokkanatha Nayak in power.[19] Between 1685 and 1688 Emperor Aurangzeb subdued Bijapur and Golconda, the premier Muslim powers of South India, and annexed them. In 1694 the Emperor appointed Zulficar Khan as Nawab of the Carnatic with capital at Arcot. This development posed a direct threat to the Hindu kingdoms of the far south. The Mughal forces marched to Thanjavur and Madurai and levied contributions. Rani Mangammal (1689-1706) of Madurai and Rajah Shahji (1684-1712) of Thanjavur accepted the Mughal sovereignty.

19. R. Satyanatha Aiyer, *Tamilaham in the 17th Century*, 1956, pp. 90-95.

However in 1707 when Emperor Aurangzeb died, there began a period of disorders during which the Empire collapsed and provinces declared their independence. Saadat-ullah Khan organised the Carnatic into an independent kingdom under the rule of his house, the Nevayets.[20]

Apart from these developments of major consequence, that which had a direct and adverse impact upon the poligars was the outbreak of a civil war in the Nayak Kingdom of Madurai. On the death of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha in 1732 without leaving a direct heir to the throne, his favourite queen, Minakshi, succeeded him at Tiruchirapalli, to which place the capital was shifted from Madurai in 1665. Bangaru Tirumalai, cousin of the departed ruler, challenged her claims and organised a rival government at Madurai. The glamour associated with the possession of Madurai city and the proximity of the rival government persuaded most of the poligars to transfer their loyalty from Minakshi to Bangaru and from Tiruchirapalli to Madurai.[21]

In the civil war that broke out Chanda Sahib, who commanded the Nevayet army, encamped on the bank of the Kaveri, saw his opportunity. He entered into an alliance with Queen Meenakshi and routed the forces of Bangaru Tirumalai, engaged in besieging Tiruchirapalli.[22] After this victory, he advanced towards Madurai. The poligars and Kallar tribes, who assembled in strength in the hilly region of Natham, intercepted his march and forced him to retreat, Rajah Tukkoji of Thanjavur in the mean time attacked Pudukkottai, but the Maravas rallied to its defence and drove out the Maratha troops. In 1736 Chanda Sahib deposed Queen Minakshi and usurped the throne of Madurai kingdom. However, the consolidation of his authority required the liquidation of the influence of the poligars, who remained stubbornly loyal to the Nayaks. He assembled a large army and attacked the palayams of Pudukkottai, Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam. The Tondaiman after a futile resistance fled to Manipallam, while the chieftains of other palayams to the coast. Another Nevayet army made its way through the woods of Natham and descended upon Madurai. Bangaru Tirumalai and his son Vijayakumara finding resis-

20. Nainar, ed. *Tuzak-i-Walajahi*, Part I pp. 58-64.
21. Besse, *Father Beschi* p. 125.
22. *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 46, pp. 218-219.

tance futile escaped to the Marawa country for asylum. But the poligars of Tirunelveli assembled their irregulars at Settur to resist the Nevayet invasion. Despite their daring struggle, Budda Sahib and Sadak Sahib, the brothers of Chanda Sahib, in command of the Muslim troops routed the poligars. The Nevayet forces took several of the chieftains as prisoners and shut them in the Fort of Madurai. They crippled the poligar resistance, occupied their forts and erected new outposts with a view to keep the country under submission.[23]

Inspite of this serious reverse, the poligars refused to submit to the invading power meekly. They appealed to the Marathas, the most prominent of the Hindu powers of the time, for intervention. The chiefs of Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga and Pudukkottai offered to furnish 5,000 horse and 40,000 foot for service with the Marathas to expel the Nevayets from the country.[24] King Sahu, guided by different considerations, decided to embrace the opportunity. He entertained an anxiety to ensure the survival of the Maratha Kingdom of Thanjavur, which was repeatedly threatened by the Nevayets, to check the Mohammadan advance in South India and to extend the Maratha influence to Kanyakumari.[25] In 1740 the Maratha army consisting of about 50,000 strong cavalry under the command of Raghuji Bhonsle and Fateh Singh moved to the Carnatic. On the 20th of May they defeated and killed Nawab Dost Ali in the battle at Damalcherri near Chandragiri. Defences of the Carnatic collapsed and Arcot fell to the invading forces. After this major victory, the Marathas marched to Tiruchirapalli early in 1741. The records of the period do not indicate whether the poligars joined them. Yet it was possible that because of the promise of aid already made and the identity of interests, they would have sent their troops to join the Maratha ranks. On the 16th of March 1741 the invading army occupied Tiruchirapalli, took Chanda Sahib a prisoner and appointed Murari Rao as the Governor of Tiruchirapalli.[26] The Nevayet troops from Tirunelveli and Dindugal rallied to the aid of Chanda Sahib but they were intercepted at Manaparai and their generals, Budda Sahib

23. Madura Mission, Annual Letter, dated 14th July, 1736.
24. Public Country Correspondence, Madras, 5 Dec. 1740 p. 65.
25. S. Radhakrishna Ayyar, *History of Pudukkottai* p. 182.
26. Ananda Ranga Pillai, Diary vol. 1, p. 118 (trans)

and Sadak Sahib, were killed in battle. Murari Rao sent an army under the command of Appaji Rao to the far south and established his authority at Madurai.[27]

The Maratha intervention relieved the poligars from the threat of extinction and resulted in the re-establishment of Hindu power. The chiefs of Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam returned to their districts. The Tondaiman regained possession of Pudukkottai. The poligars who had been thrown into captivity at Madurai obtained their freedom. The Marathas respected the rights of the poligars as guaranteed to them by tradition and maintained cordial relations with them.[28] The country returned to order.

However this period of harmony with the central authority did not last for long. Determined to re-assert the Mughal power in the Carnatic and when the Marathas were preoccupied with their internal conflicts, Nizam Asaf Jah at the command of 80,000 horse and 2,00,000 foot marched unopposed to the Carnatic. After establishing his influence at Arcot, he marched to Tiruchirapalli. In March 1743 he attacked the defences of the fort. The siege continued for six months, after which the Nizam entered into a settlement with Murari Rao, agreeing to give him Penukonda and gained possession of the coveted stronghold.[29] Asaf Jah now led his army to Madurai. Undeterred by the formidable strength of the enemy, the Kallans and the poligars harassed the enemy by frequent irruptions but failed in checking his progress.[30] Asaf Jah took the city and appointed Khwaja Abdulla as Nawab at Madurai as well as the guardian of the Nevayet prince, Saadat-ullah Khan II. Because of the worsening situation in the Deccan during his absence, the Nizam made no attempt to suppress the poligars and hurried back to Hyderabad.[31]

On the death of Kwaja Abdulla in 1744 Asaf Jah appointed in his place his general Anwar-ud-din. In June 1744 Saadat ullah Khan, the ten year old prince, was killed; it is believed with the collusion

27. Ibid pp. 134—158 and Public Country Correspondence, Madras, vol. 1 p. 89.
28. *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 46 p. 243.
29. Ananda Ranga Pillai, Diary (trans.) vol. 1 p. 243.
30. Venkatarama Ayyar, *Pudukkottai Manual*, part 1 p. 276.
31. Military Consultations, Madras, 29 July 1765. vol. 23. pp. 715-16.

of Ānwar-ud-din, his guardian. Yet more interested in the preservation of his own influence than in the punishment of the perpetrators of this atrocious crime, the Nizam appointed Anwar-ud-din himself as Nawab of the Carnatic. The new ruler founded the rule of his dynasty, the Wallajahs.[32]

The rise of another alien power in the country created again a situation of embarrassment to the poligars. Refusing to compromise with this new regime, they rallied to the Nayaks and sought to elevate Vijayakumara as the ruler at Madurai. Because of their defiant attitude, Anwar-ud-din in 1744 sent his son Maphuz Khan on an expedition to the far south for the suppression of the poligars. The Kallans as usual attacked the invaders at Natham. Maphuz Khan was defeated and forced to retreat. Mohammad Ali, the second son of Anwar-ud-din, commanded a second but more powerful expedition. He manoeuvred through the mountain passes of Natham, gained control of Madurai and advanced against the chiefs. At Tirunelveli he routed a confederacy of poligars and dismantled seventy two of their mud forts. He took several of them as prisoners, levied contributions and gained a partial control of Tirunelveli. The victorious army with considerable treasure in its possession began its triumphant return march to Tiruchirapalli. The Kallans in the mean time reassembled their irregular troops and waited on the hills of Natham. When the enemy entered their bounds, they ambushed them and looted their camp. Mohammad Ali made a narrow escape. So complete was this rout that it undid what the Nawab's army achieved with great sacrifice.[33] The poligars now made a concerted move. Led by the Marava chieftains, they entered into a settlement with the Rajah of Mysore to expel the Wallajahs and to re-establish the Nayak rule. Before this plan could be translated into practice there came unexpected developments which thwarted their patriotic venture. Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang contested for authority in the Deccan. Sayaji and Pratap Singh came into conflict with each other in Tanjavur. The Wallajahs and the Nevayets entered into a bitter struggle for the possession of the Carnatic. The Mysoreans in alliance with Murari Rao made a determined bid for the acquisition of Madurai. The

32. *Defence of Lord Pigot*, 1777. p. 83.

33. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 12 June 1767 vol. 15 p. 139.

English and the French embarked upon a prolonged war for supremacy in South India. All these powers, far and near, conspired together in converting Tamilnadu into a vast arena of conflict, with the Fort of Tiruchirapalli as the centre of concentrated attack. Overwhelmed by these unforeseen developments of major magnitude and left without a controlling authority, the poligars found it to their advantage to retire into isolation and concentrate upon matters of local interest. The period was marked by an expansion and consolidation of their influence.[34]

Growth of Poligars' Influence

The stormy political atmosphere favoured the growth of the power and influence of the poligars. If they owed their existence to their strength and service, the same factors accounted for the extension of their authority. The acquisition of rights and concessions was made at the expense of the jurisdiction either of the central authority or of the village communities. The trend of the times, created by the prevailing state of turmoil favoured the expansion of the authority of the auxiliary powers.

The rewards made by the rulers and his amuldars in return for services swelled the resources of the poligars. The Nawab of the Carnatic, whether of the Nevayet or of the Wallajah dynasty, sought the military aid of these chiefs in order to defend his authority against external enemies and his rebellious subjects. The chieftains assisted the Nawab, not so much as part of their duty to their overlord,—for he was still considered as an alien intruder—as it was in consideration of obtaining more rights. In particular during the period following the rebellion of Khan Sahib, the Nawab made it a policy to augment the authority and receipts of the poligars under the head "*deshakaval*"[35] so that they might rescue his government from the hands of the Patans, who in alliance with the Kallans and other rebels, were running riot in Madurai country.[36] The amuldars too entered into collusion with the poligars and connived at their increasing the territorial extent of their palayams and interfering in the collection of circar revenue. In

34. Ananda Ranga Pillai, *Diary* (trans) vol. 5. p. 177.
35. Deshakaval was the tax levied for performing watching duties.
36. Revenue Consultations, Madras, 28 Nov. 1800, vol. 106, pp. 3198—3201.

consequence the poligars allowed the circar only such proportion of the revenue as they pleased. In order to warrant these proceedings they spared a part of the spoil to the amuldars. This practice was nothing more than a division of the public revenue. Rapine and violence were not merely connived at but openly assisted and most of the usurpations committed by the poligars received either public sanction or secret encouragement of the persons in authority.[37]

In the mean time neglect of responsibilities and pepetration of enormities by the central administration left the village communities with no alternative but to seek the protection of the poligars. Pre-occupied with his own problems, the sovereign found it impossible to enforce law and order. Inspite of this serious failure his administration harassed the inhabitants with oppressive taxation and arbitrary exaction. The government not only did not safeguard life and property, but did enter into collusion with the criminals in consideration of money. It is recorded in the ballads that if a person paid one thousand gold coins to the government, he was given the freedom to kill any person, whom he wanted to do away with. At Ervadi in Tirunelveli district a person gave an advance of 700 coins, obtained permission of the amuldar and murdered a villager. As he defaulted in clearing the balance in a week, as agreed upon, he was arrested and thrown into prison at Palayamkottai.[38] Because of such abnoxious practices of the circar administration, the villages appealed to the poligars for protection. Readily the chieftains responded; they reappointed the old *kavalkars* or appointed their own servants and directed them to safeguard the interests of the inhabitants. In return for this service they received from the villages a voluntary contribution called '*deshakaval*'. In subsequent periods in their attempt to escape from the terrors wrought by the interminable conflicts more and more villages sought the protection of the chieftains.[39] Meanwhile the

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37. Military Consultations, Madras, 30 Oct. 1792, vol. 168 p. 5485

38. Ayyapparazatalaivār, Tirumalaivazhpuram Varalaru.

39. Revenue Consultations, Madras, 28 Nov. 1800, vol. 106 pp. 3198—3201.

In this respect the growth of the poligari system to a limited extent, resembled the commendation in feudalism of medieval Europe. In the process of commendation, the individual land owner, to ensure his safety, commended himself to a lord, gave his land to him and received it back as a fief in return for service on his part, on the promise of protection by the over-

villages which had already accepted their protection paid enhanced rates in proportion to the increased responsibility, undertaken by the poligars for holding the disorders at bay. Thus the two-fold processes—more villages seeking their protection and the *kaval* villages paying increased rates—vastly extended the jurisdiction of the auxiliary powers. Nevertheless, the consent of the inhabitants in enhancing the status of the chieftains served as the motivating force.

The chieftains employed other methods too to extend their authority over circar lands. One method was to supersede the local authority. In this case, they subjected, instead of removing, the circar *kavalkars* into a complete submission to his will and levied an annual contribution upon them as a badge of their dependence upon him. A second method was to induce the inhabitants of the circar villages to settle in the poligar's territory. This practice which appeared as resorted to with the approbation of the inhabitants was generally encouraged by the poligar and was usually brought about by his own endeavour. When the managers of the circar asked for the return of the inhabitants, the poligar on his part demanded as a condition, the recognition of his right to protect the village against exactions. Threatened with the loss of revenue, the circar had no alternative but to recognise the chief as the protector of the village. This gave him a definite right to interfere in the internal affairs of the circar country A third practice was to plough on the *kaval* lands and there by to encroach from one point to another. Whenever this was done, the poligar could not conceal his real intentions, for at that time he would have had abundance of uncultivated land in his own district. Nevertheless he undermined the authority of the central government and brought more of the inhabitants under his direct jurisdiction.[40] Added to these, the poligar diverted the trade from the circar country to his territory for obtaining the benefits, it carried. The first three of these methods were solely directed against the circar interests and the last two against the ruler as well as the inhabitants of the circar villages.

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lord. The beneficium meant that the lord granted lands to the vassal in return for certain specific services to be rendered. However, in the eighteenth century—Tamilnadu the question of security did not demand the surrender of holdings to the poligars, but only the acceptance of his protection and the payment of fees.

40. Lushington's Report, 1799—1800, p. 2—4.

In short the weakness of the central government and tyranny that marked the administration enabled the poligars to take over its rights with the consent or otherwise of the rulers and the village officials.

The evolution of the poligari system represented the culmination of an interplay of local and national developments over several decades. To begin with they were irregular chieftains, claiming authority wrongly or rightly from 'divine right', royal descent or public service. It was the achievement of the Nayaks that they reduced an irregular product of the age into a regular system, legalised by the state. True to expectations, they for long served the Nayak rulers and village communities with loyalty and presented a second line of defence and instances of defiance were seldom. But when the Nayaks disappeared from the political scene, the situation had changed. The new rulers were not only strangers to the land but belonged to a rival faith. They developed no sympathy for an institution that flourished under the uprooted royal house. They made repeated efforts either to curb or to liquidate the system, but failed. Triumph over the hostile forces coupled with the services required of them by the rulers as well as the ruled contributed to the great expansion and consolidation of the system. The changed conditions changed the character of the poligars. From a class of public servants they transformed themselves into a domestic militia, compensated for their services and paid by the rulers and the villagers. They received more of resources, converted their detached villages into military posts, strengthened their armed establishments and gradually rendered themselves independent.

CHAPTER II

THE POLIGARI SYSTEM

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the poligars because of their numerical strength, extensive resources, local influence and independent attitude represented a powerful institution in the polity of Tamilnadu. The poligar held possession of an extent of territory, headed the administration, maintained the establishments of army, police and revenue and took interest in social and cultural activity. As circumstances warranted, he rendered service to the sovereign or defied his authority. Inspite of the contradictions in the relations, he in general considered it his primary duty to extend military protection to the people living under his jurisdiction and to safeguard the possession of their properties. In certain respects or other the duties and functions of these chieftains corresponded with or differed from those of the feudal barons of medieval Europe and the jagirdars and zamindars of medieval India. No doubt the possession of estates constituted the fundamental basis of authority of these different categories of auxiliary powers. The poligar as well as the baron held possession of land on a military tenure, but the former unlike the latter claimed no proprietory right on the land of the inhabitants and never regarded the cultivators as his serfs. The jagirdar rendered service, civil or military or both, as his primary duty in return for the possession of an estate, while the zamindar paid rent. The poligar on the otherhand combined in himself the functions of both the jagirdar and the zamindar. He was the administrator of his territory, renter to his sovereign, commander of forces, guardian of public welfare and a ryot among his people. In short the duties of the poligar were of two fold nature—those to the sovereign and those to the community. They

included maintenance of bodies of troops continually equipped for military service, protection of their own communities, suppression of the criminals, punishment of offenders against person and property and payment of compensation in the event of their failure to restore property lost through theft.[1] In return for the due fulfilment of these duties, the poligar was treated as the proprietor of the rent, but not of the land.[2] A concentration of rights and responsibilities, arising from a combination of these obligations and functions accounted for the vast influence of the poligars of Tamilnadu.

Territory

The territorial extent of the palayam varied from each other. Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga were the largest, while Maniachi and Ezhayirampannai were among the smallest. Each palayam consisted of villages, personal lands of the chieftain, public lands and temple lands. The jurisdiction of the poligar extended beyond the borders of his territory; if he exercised the right of protecting the circar villages too.

As the feudal barons did, the poligar kept a part of his district, usually the best land, for his own cultivation. He kept heads of bullocks and several ploughs and employed workers for cultivation. The British records indicate an instance that a chieftain of Anamalai kept 120 ploughs for the cultivation of his personal lands and levied upon his people no taxes for his private expenses.[3] The rest of his personal estate of the poligar was distributed among his servants called, *sherogars* who were both soldiers and peasants. The *sharogars* and their followers cultivated the fields in times of peace and rallied to their chieftains for military service whenever there were hostilities. This arrangement enabled the poligars to assemble a considerable number of troops at a short notice. The Setupati of Ramanathapuram, for instance, found it no difficult a task to assemble 30,000 to 40,000 armed men on a week's notice. However it cannot be denied that the two fold nature of their service made them at the most irregulars, more useful for guerilla war than for pitched battles.

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1. Revenue Consultations, 4 Sept. 1799. vol. 97, p. 2246.
2. A. C. Borwell, *Nellore District Manual* p. 262.
3. Board of Revenue. Proceedings, Madras, 22 May 1797, vol. 178 p. 2921.

The people who were related to or associated with the poligar either because of communal identity or because of loyal service held a privileged status in the villages. They entrusted the actual cultivation of land with a caste of workers, called the Pullers, who were the counterparts of serfs in a baronial estate in Europe. The workers, who tilled the fields belonging to the poligar, received as compensation a quantity of dry grain but those, who tilled the fields of the sherogars received a fixed share of the harvest. Ability of the employers and preference of the farm workers perhaps accounted for different practices. At no time in India did the field workers receive wages needed to live a life above marginal subsistence. This was the phenomenon of the past and is of the present, accounting for the existence of marginal men of India. Equally was the case with the Pullers in poligar lands. Though they were not tied to the estate as in medieval Russia, their poverty was of so great a magnitude that they were forced to sell their services for long terms. In that case, it is pointed out, the local custom gave their master the right to extract every kind of service from them, to mortgage them to another master for the money borrowed, to hire them out to others for daily labour and even to transfer them to another person, by whom they were held in the same bondage. Yet it cannot be concluded that the status of such a field worker was not different from that of a Negro slave; for they were not subjected to it compulsorily and were permitted to go free on the fulfilment of the agreed conditions. The want of employment opportunities and presence of appalling poverty accounted for this tragic situation. This was the feature not only in the poligar estates but also in the circar territories too. Despite their scanty means of subsistence, the Pullers, eager to obtain relief from affliction in bondage, usually contracted their wants to the mere preservation of their lives, with an expectation that the accumulation of their savings might enable them to purchase their freedom at not a distant future. This would happen with no difficulty, when their master consented to release them on receipt of an amount or when he was involved in some distress. On obtaining their freedom from bondage, these workers usually mobilised all their resources to improve their lot as could be expected from liberated people.[4]

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4. S. R. Lushington, 29 Dec. 1800, Report to Board of Revenue, pp. 9—14.

Many of the palayams were situated in the hilly regions of the country and were covered with jungles to a large extent. The poligars cleared the forests, formed villages, constructed reservoirs and promoted cultivation.[5] Also they took interest in cultural activities like temple festivals, constructed *agraharams* for the Brahmins and participated in horse race, buffaloe race and the like. In fact the poligars in general identified their interests with those of the people of their territory.[6]

Administration

Irrespective of the extent and resources of his territory, the poligar maintained a government of his own and observed those forms and ceremonies, which were usually associated with the royal houses. In his palayam he was the absolute ruler, exercising both civil and military authority. He collected taxes and customs, enforced law and order, maintained his own armed establishment and administered justice. Though he was not allowed to construct forts without the consent of the sovereign, in practice he did not observe this restriction upon his authority. In fact the functions of the poligar resembled those of a virtual king.[7]

Among the public officials of the palayam the principal minister was called the pradhaun or dalawai. He assisted the poligar in the transaction of public affairs and exercised more powers or less, depending upon the character and calibre of his master. The poligar was the commander of his army and was assisted by the military officers called sherogars. He had his acredited minister, called *stanapati*, at the court of the ruler. It was through this representative that he carried on official correspondence with the central government. This practice continued for long. However when the Wallajahs established their authority over Tamilnadu, they at the instance of the English dispensed with the ministers of the poligars.

As a rule the chieftains gave considerable importance to their dignified and elegant appearance in public. The paraphernalia needed

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5. T. V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life Under Vijayanagar*, pp. 200—201.
6. Rajagopal, Uthumalai Palayapettu.
7. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 20 March 1795 vol. 46, p. 36.

for appearance, included among other things turban, turbanband, laurel for the head, war bracelets, gold chains, bangles, golden bells to be tied around the waist, white fleece, sticks, flags, umbrella, torch and parasoles. Carried away by a complex of status and dignity and determined to leave an impression with the starving people all around, each chieftain wasted much of his time to equip himself with the sophisticated items and reduced himself to self imposed ordeal in this warm country. On important occasions the poligar adorned himself like a peacock and held grand durbars. Extravagance marked the celebration of all marriages in his family. He rode on horse, camel or elephant or travelled in palanquins. Accompanied usually by large retinue, his movements were attended with considerable pomp and splendour.[8]

Village communities functioned in the territories of the poligars. Except in cases of internal feuds the poligars did not normally interfere with their working. The village had a local council. In the democratically constituted councils all land holders were members,[9] while in other bodies only the representatives of different communities[10]. The village council or the poligar appointed the village headman and the village accountant, normally on a hereditary basis. The headman called *maccadam* or *patel*, as the intermediary between the poligar and the villagers, commanded considerable influence. He served as the collector of taxes, magistrate and judge. The village accountant called *karnam* assisted the village headman in the performance of his functions. He kept a *rosham* or register which furnished details of all land holdings in the village. The subordinate establishment consisted of the *kavalkars* or watchmen and the *toliens* or scavengers. No uniform system of remunerating the local servants remained in force. They were compensated for their services either in the form of land, grāin or cash.[11]

The administration of justice received no serious attention as in any other part of the country during this period. Nevertheless the local panchayat and the poligar settled the cases. The panchayat tried the

8. Rev. Pandyan, *The Ancient Heroes of South Indian Peninsula* p. 17.
9. Village Organisation in Madras Presidency pp. 1—2.
10. Sewell's List, Copper Plate No. 65 A
11. Correspondence Relating to the Revision of Village Revenue Establishments of the Madras Presidency, 1866, pp. 6-8.

parties, involved in cases and gave its verdit. If it found it difficult to ascertain and decide, the trial by boiled ghee was resorted to and it was performed with great solemnity.[12] The working of the panchayat was not free from irregularities, for influence and bribery had their baneful effect upon the jury. Yet it served as a corrective to the prevailing system and if the litigants had no such body, they received no settlement at all. When the people relied upon verbal promises and entered into transactions without proper documentation, the panchayat familiar with the day to day developments came to their rescue. If the parties felt that they received no justice they were free to appeal to the chieftain, who served as a higher court.[13] However, the poligar could award no death penalty or mutilation without the consent of the sovereign.[14] Approval of capital punishment was not found possible when there was no sovereign or when his authority was weak during periods of uncertainty and it was found anachronistic, when the sovereign himself allowed killing in return for payment of money.

Revenue

The sources of revenue of the poligar were principally the rent from the lands, income from his personal possessions, customs and kaval dues. His share of the produce was known as *potuchilavu*, which literally meant common-expense. It was estimated at fifty percent of the yield; the assessment being made on the basis of soil conditions of the fields. The share of the chieftain was regulated by '*mamool*' or custom, but it being an undefined term was used in reality as a plea for committing every kind of abuse. The fluctuations of taxes, the want of an established standard in the assessment of dry-grain fields and the intricate details of ready-money collections were real evils in the revenue administration of the poligar territories. The peasants, on their part, relied upon evasive tactics against the irregularities in the administration of revenue. It was a common practice that a ryot managed to possess greater extent of land than what was found on the records, either by keeping the actual extent unnoticed by the officials or by bribing the surveyors. The additional area for which the peasant paid no tax varied from 50

12. B.S. Ward, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul* vol.3 p.61.

13. Selections from the Records of Fort St. George, 1816 No. 11.

14. Military Country Correspondence, 20 March 1795, vol. 46 p. 32.

to 100% of the extent of the land, for which he actually paid. Thus the system rested upon a state of conflict between oppressive exactions and fraudulent evasions.[15]

For the purpose of taxation the cultivated lands were classified into four categories, based upon productivity, as decided after ascertaining the nature of the soil. They were (1) *kirsul* or black cotton soil, free from stones and sand (2) *shevul* or land containing a mixture of red soil, gravel, stones and sand, (3) *pottul* or ground with a mixture of black and white soil with stones and (4) *veppul* or land with a mixture of brown earth, clay and sand. This classification was applied only on wet lands, while the dry lands were dealt with differently. This indicates that a scientific analysis of lands was attempted for deciding the criterion of taxation.[16]

However the ryots in the poligar territory were not completely free from exaction and oppression, which were in fact the order of the day. Yet they were not of the proportions as in the circar country. In the palayam, the inhabitants had to pay tax only to the chieftain and the village, while in the circar territory to the central authority, local administrators, village and to the invading marauders. Not unfrequently the poligars too collected taxes from circar territories. There were instances when the peasants unable to bear the Nawab's oppression took shelter in the palayams. Indirectly this alternative open to the inhabitants had a mitigating effect upon the administration. In the opinion of the British administrators the economy of Ramanathapuram appeared prosperous when the setupatis were in power, but it collapsed by 1765 when the Nawab assumed the direct administration.[17] In 1765 when the Nawab annexed the palayams of Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam, his amuldars found the taxes so low that they increased them by four times.[18] These instances indicate that the inhabitants of the poligar territories were required to shoulder much less burden of taxation than their counterparts in other areas. This happy situation, however, had changed drastically as the eighteenth

15. Lushington's report to the Board of Revenue, dated 29th Dec. 1800, pp. 9-14.

16. Ibid, pp. 10-14.

17. Military Consultations, Madras, 15 June 1772, vol. 42 p. 488.

18. Military Sundry Book, Madras, vol. 40, A letter dated 17 Jan. 1769.

century advanced towards its end. This was because the Nawab, harassed by the British for presents and contributions, oppressed the chieftains and the latter in their turn enhanced the taxes, levied upon their people. The Nawab and the British were entirely responsible if the poligars were set against the inhabitants of their own territories.

Mode of Remuneration

The poligar spent the money collected from his subjects under different items of expenditure. He paid tribute to the sovereign and used the rest for supporting his civil and armed establishments and his household. The tribute called *peishcush* was divided into instalments called *kists*. Every year the chieftains sent their representatives to a specified place, generally the taluq headquarters, for verification of accounts by the circar officials.[19] The armed servants were not always paid in cash. Lands at concessional rent were left in the possession of the military servants. Every year the chieftains spent large sums as charitable endowments and for promoting public welfare.

The poligars defrayed the remuneration to their servants in the civil and military establishments in the form of money or grain or land. Money payments were either nominal or actual. During those days of unemployment as at present many took up service without pay, just for gaining experience and in anticipation of securing a job in some distant future. In regard to actual payments, the servants as a rule, were not paid the full amount for which their services were engaged. The importance that the inhabitants attached to the glamour of high pay contributed to this anomaly, though they were certain of receiving only a third to half of the stipulated wages. If they felt themselves aggrieved, they were at liberty to quit the service. But this was difficult because the payments for several months were generally kept in arrears. If they left the service, the possibility of recovering the arrears seemed dim. Added to these, the avenues of employment too were seldom. During the period of non-payment the public servants managed to survive on the pittance, that they derived either through loan or charity, for which the importance that they attached as the servants of the poligar, gave an adequate sanction. The money payments were extremely rare. The method

19. Rajagopal, Uthumalai Palayapettu. p.13.

most generally resorted to and considered equivalent to a money payment was to give a *tuncaw* or order to a group of eight to ten peons for collecting the amount from a renter or ryot, who had defaulted remittance for years or from a criminal who had to pay a large fine. To secure such *tuncaws* on persons who seemed capable of paying the amount, the peons had to bribe the officers of the poligar. When the *tuncaw* was issued, their demands were considered as adjusted, whether they succeeded or not in recovering the amount. If they were in urgent need of money or found the chances of recovery limited, they sold their *tuncaws* at a discount of fifty to sixty percent, which were sometimes circulated in this manner from one person to another, its relative value being regulated as the circumstances of the person in question were considered thriving or otherwise until the amount was collected or lost. At times the peons received a batta from the person concerned and if it were refused they plundered his effects. Normally, however, a compromise was effected with the assistance of friends and relatives, who sold his ploughs and cattle, and with their own contributions rid him of the importunities by paying the peons a half or two thirds of their demands.

The servants engaged partly for nominal money wages and partly for grain, invariably received the particular quantity of grain in advance at a price much above the market rate. A *tuncaw* issued in lieu of money payments on amuldars, renters and ryots for any quantity of grain was considered equivalent to a money payment. This practice of issuing grain *tuncaw* was not so common in the palayams of Tamilnadu as in the palayams of Coastal Andhra - Venkatagiri, Kalahasti and Bommarajapalayam.

Lands assigned in lieu of remuneration were of *amarum* tenure or *cuttabudi* tenure. *Amarum* implied ease, and rent for this category of land was fixed on a concessional basis. A village, placed under *amarum* tenure, was made over to eight to ten peons who as mirasdars collected the tax and paid a rent as originally stipulated. It was in the interest of these servants to encourage the ryots under them to promote cultivation by giving them the just share of the produce; for otherwise they deserted their villages and settled in other places, where their rights were better respected. It was not the practice with

the poligars to bestow upon his servants in this manner the possession of productive and rich villages. On the contrary they selected those lands in a state of ruin and decay, which for the first two or three years the peons would enjoy free from any imposition beyond the original tipulated rent. But when the tanks were repaired, water courses were opened and cultivation was stabilised they were gradually required to pay *cutnums* or presents until at last they paid nearly equal to the full value of the villages. Thus the assignment served a three fold purpose: to provide remuneration, to promote cultivation and to yield additional revenue to the chief.

Under the *cutabudi* tenure the peons, who were also ryots, were assigned jungle or waste lands for cultivation in lieu of stipulated money payment. The tenure implied a gift with some obligations. The peons received loans from the poligars for the first two or three years of cultivation of the new lands and repaid the amount in instalments in the years to come. As the lands turned productive, the poligars required them to pay *cutnums* which were considered as rent for their lands. The amount first levied was the *mamool cutnum* or customary present and was collected every year after. As the peons carried out improvements to yield more of income, the poligars collected additional presents. These ryots paid additional rent if they found it not oppressive; otherwise they settled at other places. On occasions like a marriage in the family of the poligar or the consecration of a pagoda, the public servants were called upon to pay special contributions. This system too indirectly promoted cultivation and contributed to poligar's revenue, but generally at the expense of the interests of the cultivators.

In respect of inheritance the possession of *amarum* as well as *cutabudi* lands descended from father to son and so on to other degrees of affinity in the male line. On default of heirs, the land escheated to the poligar. The obligations associated with the *catabudi* tenure were similar to those of *amarum* with the distinction that the peons were bound to serve either with pikes or match locks, as might be stipulated at their own expense. When they were called for other duties, or were required to attend on the poligar, the two descriptions of peons received the same rates of batta. The two groups of servants rendered identical duties in defence of the interests of the poligar and in preventing occurrences of theft. If they distinguished themselves in battles or in

the detection of thefts, they received handsome rewards from their master. While the *catabudi* peons were more of ryots than what the *amarum* peons, were, the differences in the nature of their service did not appear very substantial.[20]

The Kaval

Kaval or watch represented a basic duty of the poligars. The servants, who actually performed this work, were called the *kavalkaras* or the *talayaris*. The kaval system that was widely prevalent in India represented a counterpart of the 'hue and cry' of Anglo-Saxon England. From time immemorial every village had its kaval establishment, controlled by the village councils or the central government. Until the Mughal invasion of Tamilnadu the poligari and the kaval systems existed as two separate but parallel organisations. The early poligars had nothing to do with the kaval establishment of the circar villages. However in subsequent period, when the rulers failed in affording protection to the villages and when the local communities sought protection from the chieftains, the two systems got themselves integrated, adding to the prestige of the poligars.

The kavalkars belonged to four groups: the arasu kavalkars' the nadu kavalkars, the desai kavalkars, and the stalam kavalkars—arasu means government, 'nadu' district, 'desai' or 'desam' direction or region and 'stalam' place or village. A kavalkara protected the grain, cattle and other domestic property of the inhabitants and guarded the public places like the roads and markets. If any robbery occurred, the concerned kavalkara was held responsible for the recovery of the stolen property, failing which to pay damages.[21] The services of the kavalkaras were rewarded by a fee called 'desha-

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20. K. Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic*, 1966, pp. 69-72.

21. Revenue Consultations, vol. 97, p. 2246.

In the Vijayanagar Empire the police officers belonged to two categories —one maintained by the state and the other by the people; the first responsible to the government and the second answerable to the local bodies. In the provinces where the *nayankara* system was in vogue, the nayaks were made responsible for the preservation of peace in their respective places. They by themselves did not attend to the police duties but appointed subordinate persons for the work. The Kavalkaras themselves appointed talayaris for each village under them. (Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar*, 1940, p. 130-131.)

kaval', which consisted of a portion of the crop, which they protected or a monetary payment in lieu thereof.

The kaval system was in substance based upon the principle of 'set a thief to catch a thief'. Accordingly, the responsibility of apprehending a thief was usually entrusted with those inhabitants, who were considered as traditional and professional robbers. The assignment of this duty upon a habitual thief created in him a sense of responsibility.[22] Thus the system sought to rectify a social evil by the application of a self corrective remedy.

The two systems, the poligari and the kaval, complemented each other. The poligars rendered military service to the king and gave security to the country against external invasions. The kavalkaras, on the otherhand, discharged police-duties and preserved internal order. The poligars were for the poligar territories, while the kavalkaras were largely for the circar-lands doing complementary duties. Both the establishments were supported by the inhabitants. The duty of the sovereign was to see them functioning properly without interfering with each other. The distinct existence of the two establishments appeared essential to prevent the overgrowth of their influence and to safeguard the interests of the sovereign as well as of the subjects.

However, the turmoil which attended the Mughal invasions and the subsequent rebellions created circumstances favourable for the integration of the two systems. The collapse of law and order exposed the inhabitants to the dangers of universal conflagration. The central administration, distracted by foreign aggressions and internal rebellions, could no more extend protection to the kavalkaras in the discharge of their duties. As they neglected their duties and as the forces of anarchy threatened the villages, the village communities sought and secured the protection of the chieftains and gave them the fee called 'deshakaval'.[23] This development added to the resources and influence of the chieftains.

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22. In Rajputana, the Minas performed the functions of the Kallans, entrusted with village watch. If adequately paid and properly managed they excelled others, engaged as police-men. They did not suffer theft or robbery to be committed. On the other hand when they were out of service the Minas like the Kallans dis tinguished themselves as the worst theives and cattle lifters.

23. Revenue Consultations, 28 Nov. 1800, vol.16 pp.3198-3201.

The kavalkaras, appointed by the poligar, kept watch at night, noted the arrivals and departures, observed the movements of the strangers and reported the suspicious characters to the chief. If a theft occurred, the kavalkara tracked the thief by tracing the foot print. If it were established that the thief went out of the limits of the village, then it was the duty of his counterpart in the next village to take up the work in pursuit. The last village to which the thief was clearly traced was made answerable for the stolen property, which would otherwise fall on the village, where the robbery was committed. The kavalkara was required to restore the stolen property to the owner. If he failed to do, it the poligar forced him to make good for the loss to the extent of his means and levied the remainder upon the entire village.[24] This indicated that the protection of property was the individual responsibility of the kavalkara and the collective responsibility of the village community.

Armed Establishment

The poligars, as they were entitled to do, maintained their own armed establishments. In this respect, they were guided by three considerations : the duty to perfrom military service to the sovereign, the necessity to afford protection to the kavalkaras in the discharge of their functions and a complex of comparative status and superiority. Frequently they neglected their duties to the ruler, yet generally constantly they attached importance to the attendance of large bodies of armed men for their appearance in public and the assertion of their rights. The military establishments naturally consumed a large part of their resources. Their military dependents consisted of three descriptions ; the amarum peons, the catabudi peons and the mercenary peons; the first two groups were paid chiefly in land and the third entirely in money and grain. The amarum peons were granted lands on hereditary basis. Assessed at a very favourable rate, paying only a quit rent, they were jointly bound to pay the tax decided for their village. These peons, placed under the command of a sardar or officer in bodies of twenty or thirty, were required to take a pledge to yield their best services to their master. Their obligations were not only to attend the summons of the poligar but to prevent theft within their villages. They forfeited their service and land if they were found

24. Village Communities in Southern India pp.55.

disqualified to discharge their duties. The cutabudi peons were also given lands. Their tenure was hereditary, but it was less by right than by sufferance. In fact they were ryots, rendering military service and paid by assignments of waste lands in lieu of pecuniary wages. They served the poligar with pikes or matchlocks at their own expense and made restitution of any property, plundered within the villages, entrusted to their care. The mercenary peons were recruited only in times of emergency. During active service, all the groups of armed men received subsistence in money and grain, exclusive of the other privileges granted to them.

The poligar trained a considerable body of men in the profession of arms. The interests of the peons were identified with the preservation of the authority of their master. The peons regarded the rights of their chief as paramount and his orders as their only law. When the poligar commanded them, they executed his orders so implicitly that on such occasions, they considered murder and robbery as mere matters of duty, for which he alone was responsible.[25] In fact, these practices intimately corresponded with the principles on which the poligars themselves owed their military service to their sovereign, whether it was real or nominal.

Warfare

The poligars excelled themselves in irregular warfare. The weapons which they used were typical of their method of war. In order to assemble their troops they fired sarabogies, a kind of park-guns.[26] The weapons in common use included the bow and arrow, cannon, muskets, wall pieces, shields, swords, pikes and match lock.[27] The pike was nothing but the bamboo spear, eighteen to twenty feet long. Target, spear, dagger, sling. bow and arrow too were in use. Clay pellets, prepared by mixing the white of the egg with clay, served the purpose of bullets. Rockets were fired into the camps of the enemies. A peculiar weapon used by the poligars especially the

25. Revenue Consultations, vol.118, pp.2688-94.

26. Military Consultations Vol. 288, p. 6934, dated 20th Oct. 1801.

27. Military Country Correspondence, Vol. 15, p. 139. Translation of a letter from Mohammad dated 12th June, 1767 to Col. Campbell.

kallans was the '*valaithadi*' or boomerang. It was a crescent shaped weapon, one end left heavy, while the outer edge sharp. Made of some hard grained wood or iron, the valaithadi measured about twenty four inches along the outer-curve and eighteen along the chord arc. A soldier, who wielded it, held it by the lighter-end and hurled it with tremendous force against the enemy. A whirling motion was soon imparted to the weapon, which brought it back to the spot from where it was thrown, unless it got struck on its victim.[28] Nevertheless these arms were of short-range. The poligars constructed forts of mud or of stone either on deep cotton plain or on the hills for the convenience of defence. They enclosed the forts with barriers and woods; but appeared vulnerable to heavy cannonade.

Money, bullocks and spies were the sinews of war during this period. Money and bullocks played no considerable role with the auxiliary powers as they did with the major powers. However, the chieftains attached much importance to the gathering of intelligence from the camps of hostile powers. The *hircarrahs* or spies, generally Brahmins-for they were preferred as their religious status ensured for them security and enabled them to move freely and unmolested—went in disguise and gathered secrets of the enemy. They marked the information in small characters on a slip of paper or palm leaf called *chit*, secured it in a quill or a hollow stick or inside the turban or in some other place. When the *hircarrah* suspected any imminent threat, he swallowed it or threw it away. However, if the enemy doubted that the spy swallowed up the chit, he administered a strong purgative to the spy or kept him confined.[29]

In times of conflict the opposing parties, as a rule, called upon their magicians to exercise all the resources of the black art for ensuring victory. The competing sorcerers sought to excel each other by issuing one charm or a counter—charm. The process ultimately ended in restoring the *status-quo-ante* of the two sides, because the opposing charms nullified each other. Ultimately the military superiority and strategy decided the issue on the field. Still the magicians of

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28. Thurston, *Ethnological Notes in Southern India*, p. 556-7.

29. K. Rajayyan, *Administration ane Society in the Carnatic*, p. 29.

the victorious party shared in a large part of the glory. This practice was not confined to the wars of the chieftains but was followed in wars of other powers too.[30]

The poligars never risked a pitched battle. When a superior force threatened them, they assumed defensive positions in their thick jungles. Lying in ambush, they boldly attacked the invading army and wrought havoc.[31] If the cavalry of the enemy launched a surprise attack, the pike-men of the poligars formed themselves into a close ring encircling the match-lock-men, pointing the pikes against the attacking horse. They then sat down in the same order and fixed the nether end of the pike into a hole on the ground betwixt their legs, while the matchlock men kept up an irregular fire above their heads against the pressing enemy. In this manner they resisted even the violent charges of the cavalry and sometimes even of the infantry ; though they were helpless against artillery fire. Added to these the chiefs constructed the forts in such a way as to guarantee its easy defence. When the enemy besieged their stronghold, their troops threw themselves behind the barriers for convenience of counter-attack. The match-lock-men,

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30. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, Part III, Ch. 9, p. 688.

31. The Maravas and the Kallans played a conspicuous part in the poligar wars. In the Tamil classic *Kalittokai* the Maravas are described as a people with strong limbs and hardy frames. These warriors, fierce looking as tigers and wearing long locks of hair, shot their arrows at poor and helpless travellers and compelled the kings at the head of large armies to turn back and fly. (quoted in *A Ceneral History of the Pudukkottai State*, p. 62.)

The Muslim invaders dreaded the Kallans much more than the regular "Uniting skill and agility to courage, they (the Kallans) went out of their woods in small bands, dispersed in the cuntry in disguise, and were always ready to reunite at the first signal .. The Kallan requires only an instant to run like lightning, rush on the horse and carry off his prey.....Soon, surrounded by a hundred adversaries who rush on him he dashes like thunder across their ranks and disappears in the midst of a cloud of dust." (Letter of Proenza, 1665, quoted in *Tamilaham in the 17th Century*, p. 82). A letter of the Madura Mission gives instances of the daring of the Kallans. In 1734 a Mughal army, annoyed at the irruptions made into its camp decided to destroy the Kallar village of Cunampetti. The Kallans relying on their thick woods and palisades received the enemy with such boldness that after an engagement the Mughals retreated after leaving many dead. The letter tells in admiration of the Kallans, whose number was put at fifty, for holding 10,000 Mughals in check. Joseph Vieyara, Annual Letter of Madura Mission, dated 14th July 1735. The ballads on the poligars are full of anecdotes deseribing the heroism of these chiefs.

taking their position on the elevated spot of the fort, fired at the approaching enemy, while the troops stationed at the bastions sallied out gallantly. The pike-men, meanwhile wielded the sharp pikes from their wonderfully sheltered enclaves in the walls. The assailants advancing towards a breach on the wall could never reach the pike-men and could seldom tell from whence the blow was struck.[32] Despite the limited resources at their command, the poligars in fact put up formidable resistance against the aggressive powers.

32. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. I, Ch. 2, pp. 6778.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONS WITH REBEL AND RULING POWERS

The Wallajahs established their sway over most of Tamilnadu in consequence of their victory over the Nevayets during the Second Carnatic War (1749-1754). In 1749, when Anwar-ud-din, the founder of the Wallajah dynasty of Arcot, was killed in the battle of Ambur by Chanda Sahib, his son Mohammad Ali escaped to the strong fort of Tiruchirapalli. Ably assisted by the English and the Marathas of Thanjavur, he defeated Chanda Sahib and his allies, the French and the Mysoreans. Emboldened by these victories and anxious to consolidate his power, he embarked upon military operations against the poligars. The Marathas during this period retained possession of the Kaveri delta. They sought to gain territories from the poligar states of Pudukkottai and Ramanathapuram but their attempts were thwarted. Mysore retained possession of the western region of Tamilnadu. Haider Ali, who captured power in Mysore in 1761, extended his control over the poligars of Dindugal. Preoccupied with his wars against the Marathas and the English, he levied large contributions but made no systematic attempt as Mohammed Ali did to suppress the chieftains.

Causes of Poligar Wars

Historical as well as political factors engendered a spirit of hostility in the relations between the Wallajahs and the poligars. The period was marked by repeated efforts made by the Nawabs to suppress the poligars and the determined resistance made by the latter in defence of their interests and rights.

The chieftains for long extended their loyalty to the Nayaks by virtue of the legal status that they obtained from them and the long

association they had. However the fall of the Nayaks and the rise of the Wallajahs created an embarrassing situation. On the one hand it released the poligars from that allegiance which they owed traditionally, without developing any thing parallel. This left them in a state of independence. On the otherhand as between the Nayaks and the Wallajahs, their sympathy remained with the former. Both these considerations, accidental yet historical as they were, led them to a state of conflict with the Wallajahs.

Secondly, the frequent political changes and the shifting fortunes of combatants, which marked the period from 1737 to 1754 saddled the chieftains in a peculiar dilemma. To render assistance to one party was an offence from the view point of the rival party and to remain neutral was offence from the point of view of both the parties. Indeed the period was full of risks. The poligars supported the Nayaks and then changed sides between the more prospective contestants like the Nevayets, the Mysoreans or the Wallajahs. By this process, many of the poligars cultivated the animosity of the successful Wallajahs.

The collection of tribute served as a potential source of embarrassment. The Nawab's demands for tribute varied year after year. Exactions had at times been carried to the highest pitch and remissions were never obtained except through resistance.[1] The Nawab's managers made it a practice to exact whatever they could from the chiefs by diverse means—kindling internal conflicts, bogus promises and mock assignments of land.[2] Thereby ultimately they taught the poligars to consider tribute not as a just payment to their sovereign but as a price paid to purchase the forbearance to oppression. Bishop Caldwell ignored the ordeals to which the poligars were subjected repeatedly, when he observed: "It can hardly be said that the idea of governing the country by means of an order of rude, rapacious, feudal nobles, such as poligars generally were, turned out to be a happy one, for down to the period of their final subjection and submission to English authority in 1801, whenever they were not at war with the central authority, they were at war with one another, and it was rarely possible to collect tribute from them on revenue due to the central authority without a display of military force which added greately both

1. Hodgeson's Report on Tinnevelly, p. 22.
2. Military Consultations, vol. 168 pp. 5465-6,

to the unpopularity and expense of the collection, "[3] On the other-hand Caillaud, who had a better knowledge of the situation, in his letter to Orme in 1775 gives an insight into the magnitude of oppression. He wrote: " that the Nawab, if he has power in his hands, will squeece these people (the poligars) unmercifully, and we should (that is ought to) see nothing but justice done. My dear Mr. Orme, our rigid northern notion of justice will make us at last the dupes and fools to the more pliant politicks of these southern climates." The letter further states: " If we support the Nawab let us (the Company) do it, and not prescribe to him in such cases as these. And after all, what have we more to do with their needs (of) government than their modes of faith! The Nawab acts justly as an eastern prince; let him not then as he pleases. We have the power still in our hands. You know the fable of the cat, the monkey and the roasted chestnuts."[4] While throwing light on the Nawab's attitude towards the poligars, the letter indicates clearly the scope of intervention by the English East India Company for taking advantage of the state of conflict in the relation of the central authority with auxiliary powers.

The spirit of independence and turbulence which many of the poligars cherished in common also led them into conflict with the Nawab. The absence of any definition of their privileges, their ignorance and the state set up by them frequently misled them to uphold themselves against the circar by force of arms. With forts, a few old guns and a little equipment of stores, they cared little for the central authority. Those who could not manage their own affairs, usually put themselves under the influence of adventurers, whose only interest it was to enrich themselves. The jargon of these self-seekers which inflated the military spirit of their masters in opposition to the Nawab's administration, served as an additional cause of the conflicts.

These stresses and strains reflected upon the attitude of the poligars towards the Nawab. Expecting no justice from the administration and holding aloft a spirit of freedom, they built up their armed strength in remote citadels and improved their resources. Confident of their might and having an easy road open to the wood for escape, whenever they

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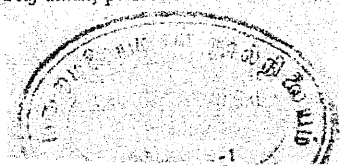
3. Bishop Caldwell, *History of Tinnevelly* p. 58.
4. S. C. Hill, *Yusuf Khan*, p. 45.



were overpowered, they asserted that spirit of independence which their situation so well qualified them to maintain.[5] In consequence a series of military exploits arising from the hostile concentrations of the poligars and the repeated efforts of the Nawab to assert his authority fill the pages of poligars' chronicles. The Nawab destroyed as many of their strongholds as he could at different times, but the more he destroyed, the more the poligars erected. In fact construction and destruction of forts constituted one of the major occupations of the inhabitants during this period.

The poligars further waited for opportunities to withhold the payment of their tributes to the Nawab. Whenever they found themselves unable to resist the demands of the Nawab they paid as much as they could; failing which they procrastinated.[6] If they found it possible to resist, they refused payments. In that case the Nawab contented himself with their gratuitious offerings, however small they were, and waited for a favourable occasion to bring forward all his past demands, which always consisted of a large accumulation of the arrears of peishcush, charges of the troops sent against them and the claims of compensation for the losses suffered by the circar on account of their depredations. The result was that a state of perpetual distrust took the place of mutual confidence which might have made the poligars good subjects in times of peace and useful auxiliaries in times of war.

The situation in which the poligars lived had a powerful impact upon their character. Exposed to arbitrary and undefined demands, they frequently practised the same injustice by force or fraud upon each other. Corrupt amuldars taking advantage of their internal disputes generally interfered not as mediators, but as fomenters of these

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5. Proceedings of the Board of Assigned Revenue, 31st Dec. 1785, vol.8 pp. 612-6.

6. The poligars, when they appeared helpless before a formidable enemy, begged pardon for their fault and offered to pay tribute. This practice was in consonance with the maxim asserted in the '*Panchatantra*', the book of apologues in India, probably the oldest of its kind in the world. This book suggests the sound wisdom of procrastination, whether with or without a reasonable hope at all critical times. The reason given for this is that by gaining time one gains the chances of success, though it cannot be considered the case always.

quarrels for gaining benefits to their own advantage.[7] Disputes among the poligars were occasioned by the unsettled boundaries and a variety of other claims. Their manner of general behaviour was such that they maintained an animosity against each other. If one poligar joined one side, the rival poligar went over to the opposite side. The Nawab and his amuldars instead of enforcing order, exploited their mutual rivalry for the advancement of their own interests.[8] At times, in the face of serious threats to their common interests they forged unity. In that case they allowed their private animosities to subside and furnished their quota of peons for the defence of the besieged palayam without appearing themselves in the contest.[9] Also, they did not hesitate to join any rebellion, for they believed that no change whatever could render them worse than what they were under the Nawab's administration.[10] The poligars, thus, acting under the stress of an interplay of common as well as individualistic motives, followed no clear cut policy. They fought against the Nawab and at times against each other, thereby falling victims to the intrigues of external powers.

The Lost Cause of the Fallen Nayaks

Despite the fall of the Nayaks, the poligars for long made repeated attempts to reinstate them in power. In 1750 when Nizam Nasir Jang marched to Pondicherry in support of Mohammad Ali in the war against Chanda Sahib, the poligars sent a mission and sought his intervention on behalf of the Nayaks. Nothing came out of this representation. After sustaining a night assault by the French, he made a hasty retreat, in the course of which he was assassinated.[11] In 1752 Nanja Raja of Mysore sent an army to the south. Khub Sahib, who led the expedition, expelled the Nevayets from Madurai and gained possession of the territory for Mysore. However the slaughter of cows and destruction of coconut trees by the Muslims alienated the sympathy of the inhabitants. Setupati Vijaya Raghunatha (1748-60) of Ramanathapuram and Rajah Udaya Tevar (1750-79) of Sivaganga, supported by other poligars, organised a rebellion and drove off the

7. Political Despatches to England, 5 Oct. 1792, vol. 2 p. 110
8. Military Country Correspondence, 21 Aug. 1763, vol. 11 p. 227.
9. Military Consultations, 10 July, 1792, vol. 163 p. 2938.
10. Ibid, 1 July, 1775, vol. 52 p. 943.
11. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 11 Jan. 1754 vol. 2 p. 56.

Mysoreans. They crowned Vijayakumara, son of Bangaru Tirumalai, as the ruler of Madurai[12] However this victory proved momentary, for immediately after the poligars withdrew their forces, Miana the Nevayet general, gained control of Madurai. Vijayakumara fled to Sivaganga.[13]

In their bid to avert further hostilities with the Muslim powers the poligars made an appeal for British aid. On the 20th of January 1754 they represented to Governor Thomas Saunders: "As we have had no king from these twenty years past to rule this country it was in a distressed condition and as we the poligars are 50 or 60 in number, we are in a very bad circumstance having no ruler to command us. If his Honour settle this country and appoint a Ruler over us it will be a means to require him (the Governor) a good name and reputation. We shall pay the tribute to the Nawab according as it was customary to the Subah of Arcot and agreeable to him and will endeavour to deserve his honour's favour, this will settle the country.[14] This representation was indicative of the recognition that the chieftains gave to the growing influence of the English East India Company and their willingness to accept the Wallajah sovereignty, subject to the elevation of a prince for Madurai for maintaining order in the country. The Madras Council took interest in the suggestion but Mohammad Ali refused his concurrence.[15] It appears that the poligars demanded the restoration of Vijayakumara to power, for in 1757 too they sought the elevation of this prince to authority.[16] But an error of judgment led Mohammad Ali to reject the appeal. Had he restored the Nayaks to power, nominally no doubt, he could have gained the effective control of the country without any serious difficulty and could have won the allegiance of the Hindu powers. The attitude of Mohammad Ali left the poligars without any acceptable leadership and in a state of hostility with the Wallajahs. In the mean time the Nawab, hard pressed for money because of his prolonged wars against the rival powers—

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12. S. C. Hill, *Yusuf Khan*, 1914, pp.26-41.
13. Rajaram Row, T. (ed.) *Ramnad District Manual*, 1933 p. 236.
14. Nama Nayak, 20 Jan. 1754, letter to Governor Saunders, Military Country Correspondence, vol. I pp. 74-77.
15. Military Consultations, Madras, 4 Feb. 1754, vol. 3 pp. 36-37.
16. *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 46 p. 274.

Chanda Sahib and the French—and the constant demands made by his ally, the English, decided on military operations.

Expedition of Heron

On the 4th of February 1755 a grand army left Tiruchirapalli on an expedition to the far south. It consisted of the Wallajah troops led by Maphuz Khan, the Company's native troops by Khan Sahib and the European troops by Colonel Alexander Heron. The Nawab accompanied the expedition, considering its importance for the consolidation of his authority and the stabilization of his finances.

On the 10th of February the forces marched to Manaparai. The demands made by the Nawab were so exorbitant that the poligars led by Lakshmi Nayak decided to resist. Thereupon the forces of Khan Sahib attacked the barriers and occupied two palayams.[17] The chiefs now submitted and paid a part of the tribute. Mohammad Ali saw enough of bloodshed and returned to Tiruchirapalli.[18] The army, resuming the march, made its way through Kallarnadu and occupied Madurai. The defiant chiefs entrenched themselves at Kovilkudi but were attacked and dispersed. In the course of the conflict the invading forces seized the brass images, which the Kallans worshipped. The massacre of the vanquished and the spoliation of the temples drove the Kallans to frenzy.[19] In the course of the struggle for gods they fell upon the British troops but their atrocities were countered by equally severe reprisals. Heron offered to restore the gods in return for a payment of 5,000 rupees but as the Kallans had no money he carried them off in a tumbril.

By the end of March 1755 the combined forces of the Nawab and the Company advanced to Tirunelveli. The poligars were not only allied with the Nayaks but appeared remiss to pay the arrears of tribute. Maphuz Khan hesitated to resort to coercion for fear that the chieftains would seek the protection of the French or asylum in the jungles. Yet as no other alternative seemed open, he decided on hostilities.[20] To begin with, the forces stormed Nattakottai, a rebel

17. Military Consultations, Madras, 13 Feb. 1755, vol.4 pp. 24-44.
18. Ibid, 6 March 1755, vol.3 p. 19.
19. Ibid, 17 Sept, 1755, vol.4 p. 159.
20. Ibid, 22 April 1755, vol.4 pp. 71-72.

stronghold near Tirunelveli, and wrought havoc with indiscriminate slaughter. The atrocities spread such a terror in the region that several poligars submitted, cleared part of the arrears and gave security for the rest.[21] Rajah Marthanda Varma of Travancore withdrew his troops from the occupied territory of Kalakkad and Panagudi.[22] Still many of the principal poligars, particularly Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi and Puli Tevar of Nelcatansevval refused to comply with the demand for payment.

On the 30th of April the detachments stormed Panjalamkurichi. The poligar agreed to pay tribute and gave security. After this victory the troops infested Kovilpatti and forced the poligar of Ettayapuram to accept terms.[23] Maphuz Khan and Heron made settlements for a total amount of 4,50,000 rupees but the real collections came to 1,10,000 rupees against an expenditure of 70,000[24] As the expectation of collecting a huge amount proved a sheer reverie and as the threat of a French invasion of Tiruchirapalli seemed real, Governor Pigot became disenchanted with the expedition. In compliance with his repeated orders the army began its return march from Tirunelveli in May.[25]

When the forces advanced a few miles, Maphuz Khan prevailed upon Heron for undertaking an expedition against Puli Tevar, the most formidable and talented of the chieftains of the western region of Tirunelveli. Accordingly they marched to Vasudevanallur, one of the strongholds of the poligar, and directed him to make an immediate payment of Rs. 20,000 under threat of hostilities. An indomitable personality as he was, Puli Tevar contemptuously ignored the demand.[26] The vindictive assilants launched a vigorous attack upon the fort. However for want of heavy cannon all attempts to make a practicable breach failed. By gallant sorties the troops of the chieftain repulsed the attack. Humbled and humiliated the forces abandoned the siege and made a retreat. To add to their predicament while they

21. Hill, *Yusuf Khan*, pp. 37-38.
22. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 21 June 1757 vol.5 pp. 127-129
23. Military Consultations, Madras, 17 Sept. 1755, vol.4, p. 157.
24. Ibid, 4 June 1755, vol.4 pp. 88-91.
25. Public Consultations, Madras, 29 Sept. 1755 vol. 84 p. 381
26. Military Consultations, Madras 4 June 1755 vol.4 pp.88-91.

were passing through the defiles of Natham, the Kallans fell upon the exhausted troops and regained possession of their brass gods.[27]

Though much was expected, the expedition yielded no benefit, either to the Nawab or the Company. Neither from the military nor political nor financial point of view did the campaign prove fruitful. Not only did the army fail in the suppression of the chieftains but also did suffer serious reverses at the hands of Puli Tevar and the Kallans. Settlements were made with several poligars but they could not be enforced. In accordance with the prevailing tendency the generals of the Nawab and the Company gave more attention to the receipt of presents than to the collection of tribute. The chieftains subtle as they were, united against the common enemy for taking advantage of the corrupt system. They administered bribes to the avarice of their enemy and procrastination to his passion for command but retained their military strength and political independence almost unassailed. In consequence the results were negative. Because of hostilities the inhabitants abandoned cultivation and manufacture. The poligars learned how to deal with the troops of the Nawab and the Company.

Conflict with Maphuz Khan

In 1755 Maphuz Khan assumed the governorship of Madurai. As Governor, he was required to pay fifteen lakhs of rupees as the annual rent for Madurai and Tirunelveli. Subject to this condition he was left in absolute control of the administration. He made a strenuous effort to suppress the poligars, but the problems which faced him appeared formidable. The local powers, among whom the most conspicuous were, the Patan chiefs, the Kallans, the Maravas, Kattabomman, Puli Tevar and the Rajah of Travancore defied the Wallajah authority. The Patan chiefs in co-operation with the Kallans re-established themselves near Madurai.[28] The rulers of the Marawa states allied themselves with the Dutch. Kattabomman occupied the villages adjoining Panjalamkurichi, while the Rajah of Travancore took possession of Kalakkad. The western poligars of Tirunelveli in the mean time extended their sway over Nadumandalam.[29] The

27. Ibid, 19 June, 1755, vol.4, pp. 206-207.

28. Military Country Correspondence, 10 April, 1756, vol. 4 pp. 43-44.

29. Ibid, 8 Nov. 1755, vol. 5. p. 80

poligar of Wadagara was the most powerful of the western poligars, but Puli Tevar by his ability and subtility of his character gained an ascendancy in the councils of the chiefs. Puli Tevar proposed a union of the western and the eastern poligars against Maphuz Khan, but the chieftains of Panjalamkurichi and Ettayapuram appeared reluctant, as they had given hostages to the Nawab during the campaign of Heron. Yet most of the chieftains made a common cause against the Wallajahs.[30]

Against this dreadful array of opposition, Maphuz Khan's resources to surmount it appeared limited indeed. He combined in himself the prestige of the elder brother of the Nawab and the powers of the commander of the forces, but his army was neither well disciplined nor properly equipped.[31] Nor was he assisted by any able deputy. Danishmund Khan, otherwise known as Barkatoula, was in control of Madurai, but he was more interested in diversion with the dancing girls than in safeguarding the interests of the Wallajahs.[32] Still Maphuz Khan had two advantages: the control of the principal forts of Madurai and Palayamkottai and the absence of any binding unity among the rebel chiefs. Some of the poligars even appeared inclined to change sides in consideration of rewards and to fight against their fellow poligars.

As a first step, Maphuz Khan sought to detach the eastern poligars from their attachment with the western. He ceded a few villages and granted concessions in tributes to the poligars of Panjalamkurichi and Ettayapuram in return for their alliance. Reinforced by the troops furnished by them, he expelled the forces of Travancore from Kalakkad. In March 1756 the rebels numbering about 20,000 assembled near Tirunelveli but on the 21st in a hard fought battle Maphuz Khan defeated them and killed their chief, Miana.[33] Despite this victory the ravages by the poligars continued so unabated that no

30. Bishop Caldwell, *Tinnevelly*, p. 98.

31. Ranga Pillai, the diarist, had no high opinion about Maphuz Khan. He says that Maphuz Khan was incapable of making himself respected; was black and ugly, manners were unknown to him, he did not know how to treat visitors, and that the peons were orderly, decent and wore clean clothes, and turbans, but he was worse than them. (The Diary, Vol. I, p. 308)

32. Military Country Correspondence, 10 April 1756. vol. 4 pp. 43-44.

33. Ibid, 4 Mar, 17th July, vol. 4, pp. 29, 43, 44 & 107.

collection could be made. Convinced of the necessity of taking more vigorous steps, the Nawab appealed to the Madras Council for military support. Accordingly, at the instructions of Lord Pigot, the Governor of Fort St. George, an expedition advanced to Tirunelveli. Khan Sahib,[34] who commanded the army, faced the situation squarely. He stormed the forts of the poligars and mercilessly massacred the fleeing population. The fury with which he conducted the operations threw the chieftains into panic. The rebels begged for quarters, paid tribute and evacuated the circar villages. Among the chieftains who surrendered were Puli Tevar and the Poligar of Sivagiri.[35] The coercive means of Khan Sahib proved markedly successful but the settlements which he made in disregard to Maphuz Khan's authority led him into a conflict with the latter.

Maphuz Khan looked upon the proceedings of Khan Sahib especially the admission of the Company's troops into the fort of Madurai and the collection of tribute from the poligars in disregard to civil authority as a direct challenge to his administration. Despite his inability to settle the country or to pay the rent, the jealousy with which he decided to retain his powers in opposition to the independent attitude of Khan Sahib led the two leaders into conflict. Maphuz Khan proceeded to Madurai, expelled the Company's troops from the fort and entered into an understanding with the Patan chiefs in defence of his personal authority.

The defiant proceedings of Maphuz Khan began as a move against Khan Sahib but they assumed the proportions of a rebellion against the Nawab and his ally, the English. Before long the poligars were drawn into it. Mohammad Ali and Lord Pigot could have nipped the trouble in its bud had they taken timely action to allay the suspicions of Maphuz Khan but they did not, as their own political interests came into conflict. The Nawab, in accordance with his favourite policy of dispensing with an ally on the realisation of his purpose,

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34. Khan Sahib was born of Hindu parents in Ramanathapuram, but early in his life he ran away from his house and converted to Islam. After serving the French and the Nawab he entered the service of the Company with the rank of subedar. His perfect fidelity, intelligence and martial talents won for him the admiration of the English. He was destined to play a significant role in the succeeding decade.

35. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 23 Aug. vol. 4 pp. 69 & 129.

urged Lord Pigot to recall Khan Sahib from Tirunelveli. He complained that Khan Sahib had interfered in his administration, collected taxes and admitted troops into the fort of Madurai without his authority. Further, he asserted that the presence of Khan Sahib in Tirunelveli was no longer required and that his brother had no money to pay the expenses of the forces of the Company.[36] Despite this complaint, Lord Pigot anxious to preserve the influence of the Company in Madurai, defended what Khan Sahib did. He pointed out that Khan Sahib collected the revenue as per the agreement which provided for the sharing of the rent between the Nawab and the Company and that he garrisoned the fort of Madurai for the security of the country. Not only did he refuse to recall the Company's forces but also did inform the Nawab that Maphuz Khan had to rejoice at what Khan Sahib did.[37] In this apparent conflict between Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib, there was involved in reality the rivalry between the Nawab and the Company for political influence. Therefore the issue raised by Maphuz Khan's opposition to Khan Sahib defied any immediate solution. It became evident that unless a governor acceptable to both the Nawab and the Company was appointed it would be difficult to enforce a co-ordinated policy for the settlement of the country. Accordingly Lord Pigot and Mohammad Ali appointed Tatarapa Mudali, a wealthy financier, as renter of Tirunelveli with effect from the 1st of July, 1756. Barkatoula, appointed by Maphuz Khan, retained control of Madurai. Tatarapa Mudali made settlements with the village heads and poligars for the payment of taxes. But the rivalry between Tatarapa Mudali and Khan Sahib for supremacy again created complications. Khan Sahib expelled the poligars from the *cutchery* of Tatarapa Mudali and executed five men sent by Puli Tevar for the payment of tribute. These high handed proceedings held the authority of the renter in ridicule, drove the poligars again to hostility and helped Maphuz Khan to organise resistance with the support of the chieftains.[38]

Alliance with Maphuz Khan

In August 1756 Maphuz Khan went through a ceremony of receiving a firman or order of appointment to governorship from 'the

36. Ibi5, 15 May, 1756, vol. 4, p. 57.
37. Ibid, 19 May, 1756, vol. 4 p. 59.
38. Ibid, vol. 4 p. 29.

Nawab.' He went out of the fort with great pomp, saluted a person mounted on an elephant and received a rolled paper. After proclaiming himself governor of Madurai, he issued orders appointing Baraktoula as his deputy for Nadumandalam and Mir Jaffar for Tirunelveli.[39] Yet the rebellion could not be sustained without the support of the poligars, against whom he fought on several occasions. Eager to gain their alliance, he granted concessions in territories, which were not his own, to the chieftains. He ceded Wallachinattam, Taravedi and Terembore situated near Madurai to the Patan chiefs in return for their military and financial aid[40] He permitted Kattabomman to occupy the Nawab's villages adjoining Panjalamkurichi and the Rajah of Travancore to annex Kalakkad.[41] The poligars, angered at the imperious behaviour of Khan Sahib, on seeing the prospect of gaining more territories joined the ranks of the rebels. In January 1757 after posting the Kallans for safeguarding the northern borders of Madurai, Maphuz Khan proceeded to Nelcatansevval, granted the districts of Alwarkurichi, Ambasamudram, Papankulam and Rengasamudram to Puli Tevar and won his firm alliance. The rebels made Nelcatansevval the principal base of operations in Tirunelveli.[42] In a bid to win the support of the Hindu powers he promised the restoration of the country to the Nayaks and sent his deputies to the Marawa states and Mysore for seeking aid.[43]

However, the confederacy suffered from glaring anomalies. Some of the principal poligars especially of Sivagiri and Ettayapuram gave no support to Maphuz Khan. Many of the allies were half hearted, for they were guided more by their own interests than by any common cause. Obviously the rebellion assumed the proportions of an unorganised struggle aimed at the realisation of multilateral objectives. While Maphuz Khan promised the restoration of the Nayaks to their former dignity, he did not define the status which he himself aimed at. The poligars, on the otherhand, decided to annex as many villages as possible, without giving any regard to the jurisdiction of their leader

39. Military Consultations, 7 Sept. 1756, vol. 6. p. 733.
40. Military Country Correspondence, 15 Aug. 1756, vol. 4 p. 125.
41. Ibid, 25 Sept. 1756, vol. 4 p. 146.
42. Ibid, 29 Nov. 1757, vol. 5 p. 198.
43. The Indian Antiquary, vol. 46, p. 274.

or of the Nawab. In short the pursuit of common policy was lost in the labyrinth of conflicting objectives.

Nevertheless the rebellion broke out in January 1757 causing considerable alarm. Rebel forces consisting of 1000 horse and 10,000 armed men made irruptions into circar territories in Tirunelveli. Spreading desolation everywhere, they moved to Panjalamkurichi, where the troops of Kattabomman numbering 4000 joined them.[44] Tatarapa Mudali's irregulars fled the country and his administration collapsed. Muphuza Khan and Puli Tevar summoned the neutral poligar of Ettayapuram to join their ranks, but the latter refused. Thereupon they ravaged his palayam and destroyed the town of Ettayapuram. The rebels sent the spoils of plunder to Nelcatansevval. Khan Sahib advanced from Srivalliputtur to intercept the convoy of the rebels, but did not succeed.[45] The poligar of Wadagara occupied Kadayanallur, Tangachi and part of Sankaranainarkoil, while the Rajah of Travancore annexed Valliyur.

With the spread of the rebellion, the major part of the province of Tirunelveli passed under the control of Maphuz Khan and his associates. The troops of the Nawab and the Company retained control of a few strong posts, yet their renter could collect no taxes from the villages except in competition with the rebel chiefs. Khan Sahib set up a post at Srivalliputtur and held control of the fort of Tirunelveli.[46] Aided by the poligars of Sivagiri and Sattur, he repulsed a rebel attack on his post at Alwarkurichi.[47] The rebels again assembled in strength at Alwarkurichi but in a fierce battle fought on the 5th of March, 1757 were dispersed. Puli Tevar lost two of his generals, poligar of Wadagarai one of his legs and the chieftain of Singampatti his palayam.[48]

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44. The observation of the historian Mr. Orme that Kattabomman, dreading the consequences of his refusal to co-operate with the rebels, joined Mapuz Khan and Puli Tevar (*History of Indostan*, Vol. II, p. 199-200) is untenable. The official records of Fort St. George clearly state that Kattabomman was already in alliance with Maphuz Khan and hence he sent his troops to the rebel camp. (Military Country Correspondence Vol. 4, pp. 180-181) Tatarapa to Madras council, dated 29th Nov. 1756 vol. 4. pp. 180-181)
45. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, Vol. II, pp. 199-201.
46. Military Country Correspondence, Feb. 1757, vol. 5 pp. 25. & 53.
47. Ibid, 25 Mar. 1757, vol. 5. p. 45.
48. Military Consultations, Madras, 12 Mar. 1757, vol. 7, p. 226-7.

As the rebels still retained control of extensive territories, Lord Pigot sent a large army in support of Khan Sahib. John Caillaud in command of the expedition marched to Ramanathapuram, as the Kallans closed the direct route through Natham, and reached Tirunelveli early in March, 1757. Yet the forces found it difficult to launch offensive operations. The shortage of provisions and the onset of the Monsoon presented impediments. Puli Tevar and Barkatoula appealed to Haidar Ali for aid. As the Third Carnatic War broke out, it appeared that the French would send an expedition to Tiruchirapalli. Because of these considerations, Caillaud and Khan Sahib began their return march on the 11th of April. Alarmed at the possibility of an assault on Madurai, the rebels led by Barkatoula, trekked in pursuit, skirting along the hills. In the night they halted on the borders of Sivagiri. Taking them as intruders, the troops of Sivagiri fell upon their camp and dispersed them. In the early morning the rebels reassembled and resumed their march to Madurai.[49]

The fort of Madurai was large and had two surrounding walls with square towers at intervals. The inner wall was twenty two feet in height but was neither well maintained nor properly manned. Yet, what added greatly to its strength was that the space between the two walls was so over grown with thick bushes of thorny plants that it appeared insurmountable at most of the places. However Caillaud to his exultation discovered a small open space near a gate, not well guarded, on the western part of the ramparts. He decided to escalade the walls through this vulnerable spot. In the night of the 29th of April the troops approached the foot of the walls undiscovered, fixed up the ladders and got over the first wall. The assault progressed according to plan and the assailants moved steadily forward to the inner wall. Now a cur dog, which silently followed one of the sepoys, frustrated the bold venture. Overwhelmed by its helplessness to reach its master into the fausse-bray it gently barked; instantaneously its counterpart in the fort answered it. The rebels took up the alarm, hung out blue lights of sulpher and started a shower of arrows, stones, lances and fire arms on the intruders. In the resultant confusion, the troops of Caillaud retreated, but without suffering any serious loss.[50]

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49. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, vol. 2 p. 209.

50. Military Consultations, 16 May, 1757, vol. 7, p. 427.

Soon afterwards, Caillaud marched back to Tiruchirapalli to defend this fort against a French expedition.

In the absence of Caillaud, the depredations by the poligars of Tirunelveli and the military operations against the rebels of Madurai continued. Maphuz khan and Puli Tevar recovered possession of the lost posts, but their attempts to storm the fort of Tirunelveli failed. However when a body of troops left the fort on its way to Madurai, Maphuz Khan captured it. After this victory the rebels attacked Palayamkottai but Tatarapa Mudali won over the poligars of Panjalamkurichi and Ettayapuram to his side, and rescued the besieged garrison. Still the rebels retained control of most of the country.[51]

At Madurai the siege continued. On the 9th of July the rebels sallied out in great strength, but were beaten. After the return of Caillaud from Tiruchirapalli the attempt was renewed and on the 10th of July a part of the wall was battered down. At 2 0' clock in the afternoon, the forces advanced to the breach. The rebels taking the signal flanked the towers and stubbornly resisted the assaults. They set fire to bags filled with powder as they tossed them down over the besiegers, Ultimately, unable to storm the fort and suffering considerable loss, Caillaud withdrew from the venture.[52] Now the asssailants relied upon intrigues. Caillaud and Khan Sahib uccessfully persuaded several chiefs, the rajahs of the Marawa states, Mudemiah and the poligars of Panjalamkurichi, Sivagiri, Ettayapuram and Settur to join their camp.[53] Either their conviction that the struggle was futile or their desire to win the favour of the Nawab forced them to change sides. Kattabomman furnished 1000 troops for service with Khan Sahib, while Mudemiah brought with him the Kallans of Natham. These defections considerably weakened the rebels. Still Puli Tevar, Barkatoula and Nabi Khan Kattack remained firmly in their alliance with Maphuz Khan.

Expecting the arrival of reinforcements either from Tirunelveli or from Mysore, Barkatoula continued the defence of Madurai against a concentration of the hostile columns. He appealed to Maphuz Khan

51. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, Vol.II, pp.235-9.
52. Military Consultations, 9 July 1757, vol.8 p.641.
53. Military Country Correspondence, 15 Aug. 1757, vol.5 pp.159-160.

for reinforcements but was of no purpose.[54] Haidar Ali too did not send any relieving expedition. Greatly disappointed, Barkatoula consented to surrender the fort if the assailants paid twelve lakhs of rupees.[55] After prolonged negotiations, Caillaud made a settlement with Barkatoula agreeing to pay a small amount of Rs.170,000. On the 8th of September 1757 the rebels evacuated Madurai and Caillaud took possession of the fort. The acquisition of Madurai deprived the rebels of the control of a province and interrupted their communications with Kallarnadu. Maphuz Khan withdrew from the siege of Palayamkottai and retreated to the west to the palayam of Puli Tevar.[56]

Despite this important victory, Caillaud could not follow it up on account of the outbreak of the war with the French-the Third Carnatic war. In October he returned to Madras after entrusting the command of the defences of Madurai with Khan Sahib.[57] The withdrawal of the forces and the rebellion of the poligars facilitated Haidar Ali's expeditions to the far south. In October 1757 championing the cause of the poligars, he marched to Madurai and occupied Sholavandan.[58] On the approach of Khan Sahib he took his stand at Natham but was defeated and forced to retreat to Dindugal.

After his return from Natham, Khan Sahib sought to settle the War torn country. He strengthened the defences of Madurai and Sholavandan and posted the Kallans to guard against Mysorean incursions. Eager to promote the settlement of the country he impressed upon the Madras Council the necessity of persuading Maphuz Khan to leave Madurai. He asserted categorically that unless Maphuz Khan withdrew from his alliance with the poligars, the disturbance would never cease and that the Nawab could never collect all the revenue. Accordingly, Lord Pigot advised the Nawab to persuade his brother to evacuate Madurai by promising to make a decent provision for his support.[59] In compliance with this suggestion Mohammad Ali sent

54. Military Consultations, 11 June, 1757, vol.7, p.583.
55. Ibid, 4 Aug, 1757, vol.8 p.704.
56. Military Country Correspondence, 8 Sept. 1757, vol.5 p.174.
57. Radhakrishna Aiyar, *A General History of the Pudukkottai State*, p.216.
58. Military Consultations, 20 Oct. 1757, vol.8 p.926.
59. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, p. 252.

his deputies to Nelacatansevval in February 1758. The deputies saw Maphuz Khan residing in a hut made of straw and living a life upon what Puli Tevar parted with. Still, he demanded the recall of Khan Sahib from Madurai and the grant of a district yielding two lakhs of rupees as the condition of his withdrawal from the alliance with the poligars. But the Nawab rejected the terms and the attempt at a settlement failed.[60] By the end of 1758 Khan Sahib himself marched to the north for the defence of Madras which was then besieged by the French led by Count de Lally.[61]

In 1758 the Nawab established his sway over Turaiyur, an important palayam in Tiruchirapalli, taking advantage of a succession dispute. The ruling chief was Varadaraja Reddi but his claims were contested by his cousin Venkatachala Reddi. In September 1758 at the request of Venkatachala Reddi for military aid, the Company's forces led by Khan Sahib and Joseph Smith marched to Turaiyur. As the forces captured the barriers, the poligar fled to the borders of Mysore. A large section of the population joined the chief in exile. Venkatachala Reddi now assumed management of the palayam and it seemed that the expedition was a success. However, in March 1759, soon after the withdrawal of the forces, the expelled chief descended upon the district. Now the the other poligar fled and a body of troops which had been stationed by Khan Sahib surrendered.[62] Varadaraja Reddi, however, offered terms, which the Nawab accepted for fear of the poligar joining the French. Mohammad Ali recognised the title of Varadaraja Reddi and received tribute.[63]

Khan Sahib and Puli Tevar

In May 1759 the Madras Council with the approval of the Nawab appointed Khan Sahib as Governor of Madurai. On his return from Madras he found all the territories extending from Natham to the walls of Travancore again occupied by the poligars, belonging to the camp of Maphuz Khan. In his bid to weaken the rebel ranks, he created dissensions among them. He won over the rulers of Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga and Pudukkottai and dealt with the other poli-

60. Military Country Correspondence, 8 Mar. 1775 vol. 6 p. 31.
61. Radhakrishna Aiyar, *A General History of Pudukkottai State*. p. 216.
62. Military Consultations, 12 & 27 Mar. 1759, vol. 10 p. 56, 92.
63. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, vol. 2 pp. 336-340 & 365.

gars firmly.[64] The Kallans refused payment of tribute and treated the demands for payment with contempt. Whenever they were required to pay peishcush they used to remark: the heavens give rain to the land, our cattle plough the field and we cultivate, why should we pay tribute to an equal.[65] But Khan Sahib refused to compromise with his authority. He attacked the villages of Kallarnadu and continued his policy of desolation and extermination for the entire month of June. As the resistance failed, the Kallans submitted and paid tribute. After effecting this settlement the forces began a simultaneous offensive against the eastern and western poligars of Tirunelveli. In the east he ravaged Ettayapuram and Kolarpatti and forced the chieftains to clear the arrears.[66] In the west he stormed Kalakondan, held by the troops of Maphuz Khan and Puli Tevar. The poligars entrenched themselves at Kanguntram but were routed and the palayams of Sorandai and Uthumalai were annexed.[67] In September 1759 Khan Sahib with the support of Travancore attacked Wadagarai. On the approach of the enemy the poligar fled to Nelcatansevval. Taken by surprise, Puli Tevar requested the ruler of Travancore to withdraw from the alliance but without success. In return for military aid Khan Sahib ceded Kalakkad to Travancore without the Nawab's consent.[68] In November the combined forces invaded Nelcatansevval. Reinforced by more troops from the Marawa states and Travancore, it began a siege of Vasudevanallur. On the 27th when the assault was in progress Puli Tevar with 3000 men gallantly fell upon the assailants. The poligar lost 350 of his men against Khan Sahib's 200. At the critical hour a heavy cannon of the Company burst. Puli Tevar wrested victory and the enemy was put to flight. This gave a serious blow to the authority of the Nawab and the Company.

However in July 1759 when the military operations of Khan Sahib were still in progress, Maphuz Khan sent messages to Lord Pigot conveying his desire to enter into a settlement with his brother.[69] As

64. Ibid, vol. 2 pp. 561 & 705.
65. B. S. Ward, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, vol. 3 p. 7.
66. Military Country Correspondence, 12 July, 1759, vol. 7 p. 150.
67. Ibid, 30 Nov. 1759, vol. 7 pp. 363-5.
68. Ibid, 30 Nov. 1759, vol. 7 pp. 363-365.
69. Ibid, 31 July, 1759. vol. 7. p. 172.

the condition of his withdrawal, he demanded the grant of a district for his support,[70] the cession of Ambasamudram and Rangasamudram to Puli Tevar and the recognition of the title of the poligar of Wadagarai.[71] In response the Nawab wrote letters promising to make adequate provisions for his support, but indicating no concessions to the poligars.[72] In March 1760 the rebel chief left the camp of Puli Tevar and returned to the court of the Nawab. Thus the rebellion of Maphuz Khan ended; but it did not settle the relation of the Nawab with the rebel poligars.[73]

The significant victory of Puli Tevar over a formidable combination in December 1759 bolstered the hopes of the rebels and set in motion fresh wave of disturbances. The Dutch whose commercial interests were threatened in consequence of the growing influence of the English drew closer to the poligars. The prospect of getting aid from Haidar Ali and the French appeared bright. These factors contributed to the rise of the Eastern and the Western Coalitions against the Nawab. Kattabomman and other poligars of the eastern region of

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70. Ibid, 11 Aug. 1759, vol. 7 p. 195.

71. Ibid. Vol. 8, p. 114 for 1760. Copy of a letter from Maphuz Khan to the Nawab. (no date).

    Historical accurancy has not received due consideration in the *Trivandrum District Gazetteer* when it deals with the cession of Kalakkad. It proceeds thus: Yusuf Khan (Khan Sahib) represented to the Nawab and the Company of the advisability of entering into a treaty of alliance with Travancore. The proposal was accepted and Kalakkad was ceded to Travancore. The forces of Travancore, in consequence, helped Yusuf Khan to defeat his enemies and to re-establish his authority (A. Sreedhara Menon, *Trivandrum District Gazetteer*, 1962, p. 205)

72. Military Country Correspondence 17 Sept. 1759, vol. 7B p. 263.

73. Ibid 10 May 1760, vol. 8 p. 165.

    Maphuz Khan remained at peace with the Nawab for the next few years. In 1765 he expressed a desire to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and requested his brother to give him a loan. Mohammad Ali paid Rs. 1,03,000 after taking a bond and furnished him with an escort, a few camels and tents. A few days later, Maphuz Khan represented that he spent away the money in liquidating his debts and requested the Nawab to advance Rs. 5,000 more; upon which Mohammad Ali paid him double of what was asked. Maphuz Khan took leave of his brother and started for Mecca, but after proceeding upto Chittur, a few miles north of Arcot, he returned. The Nawab, now, remarked that Maphuz Khan was always guided by his women.* (*Military Country Correspondence, vol. 13, pp. 299-304 Nawab to Madras Council, dated 17th Sept. 1763.)

Tirunelveli organised themselves into the Eastern Coalition.[74] Puli Tevar and other poligars of the western region entered into another alliance. The linguistic or regional differences—for in general the eastern poligars were of Telugu descent, while the western poligars of Tamil descent—prevented the union of the two groups. In the absence of Maphuz Khan they lacked a common leadership. The eastern poligars received the support of the Dutch. The western poligars, on the other hand, orgainsed their resistance in close association with Haidar Ali and the French.[75] The rebels received further encouragement when Haidar Ali and the French entered into an alliance against the Nawab and the English. By a settlement made in April 1760 the two powers decided to conquer the Carnatic and to divide it between themselves; Haidar Ali was to get the southern Carnatic and the western part of the central Carnatic while the French the rest of the territory.[76]

The Eastern Coalition was the first to commit aggression and to engage the attention of Khan Sahib. Kattabomman occupied the fort of Ottapidaram,[77] while the Dutch invaded Alwar Tirunagari and Manapad.[78] But Khan Sahib encountered these aggressions with promptitude. Gaining the support of the rulers of Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga,[79] he expelled the Dutch from the circar country and recaptured Ottapidaram.[80] Wisely, he restricted his operations strictly to defence and committed no aggression on the poligar or Dutch possessions. On the 4th of June Haidar Ali's forces consisting of 1500 horse and 2000 sepoys arrived at Tyagadurg on the southern borders of Mysore, expecting the arrival of a French army for opera-

74. Military Country Correspondence, 15 June 1760, vol. 8. pp. 194-5.

75. The principal eastern poligars were those of Panjalamkurichi, Ettayapuram. Kulattur, Mailamandai, Maniachi, Kadalgudi, Nagalapuram, Ezhayirampunnai, Settur and Kolarpatti- The important western poligars were the chiefs of Wadagarai, Sivagiri, Nelcatansevval, Singampatti, Wootamalai and Surandai.

76. According to the terms of the agreement Lally agreed to cancel the bond for Rs. 25 lakhs which Nanja Rajah had given to the French during the struggle for Tiruchirapalli. (Military Consultations, 9th Jnne, 1760, Vol. 12, p. 516.)

77. Military Country Correspondence, 15 June 1760, vol. 6 pp. 194-5.

78. Ibid, 25 June, 1760, vot. 8 p. 205.

79. Ibid, 5 July, 1760, vol. 8 p. 218.

80. Ibid, 4 July 1760, vol. 8. p. 213.

tions in support of the poligars.[81] But Lally miserably failed in sending his forces because of the desperate state of his finances. The English occupied Karur and forced Haidar Ali to withdraw his troops sent to Natham.[82] In December 1760 Khan Sahib began his campaign against the Western Coalition. On the 19th he entrenched himself within three miles of Nelcatansevval. The following day Puli Tevar charged the hostile columns but withdrew after he lost 100 of his men.[83] The siege continued for about four months. In April 1761 on the arrival of reinforcements, Khan Sahib carried the trenches close to the walls. His success in capturing the summit of a hill, which commanded the view of the fort, threw the rebels into disorder. Erecting batteries on the top of the hill, he kept up an uninterrupted cannonade against the fort for days together, in consequence of which he cut off the rebel communications and immobilised the garrison. Unable to withstand the ordeal or to obtain supplies and reinforcements, Puli Tevar surrendered on the 16th of May 1761. After this discomfiture the rebels evacuated their strongholds at Panagur and Vasudevanallur. Khan Sahib magnanimously permitted his enemy to escape to Ramanathapuram.[84] He followed up this victory with the suppression of other chiefs too. While he demolished twenty nine mud forts, he garrisoned forty five other posts with his own troops. The success which attended these operations assisted the establishment of Nawab's authority.[85]

Though humiliated and humbled ulimately Puli Tevar was one of the illustrious figures in the chequered history of the poligars. The vivacity of his character gave him an ascendancy over the western poligars, while his determined resistance to the Nawab's overlordship made him a potential enemy of the Wallajahs. Despite his command of only slender resources and an irregular force, he spearheaded a prolonged struggle. The principal architect of the coalition of poligars organised against the Nawab. he was noted for his cool strategy and daring gallantry. The last defence of Nelcatansevval for more than

81. Military Consultations, 9 & 27 June 1760, vol. 12 p. 580 & vol. 15 p. 614

82. Ibid 23 Sept. 1760, vol. 13 p. 861.

83. Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, vol· 2 p. 707.

84. Military Country Correspondence, 25 May 1761, vol. 9 p. 58.

85. Ibid, 18 Jan. 1762, vol. 10 p· 40.

four months was in keeping with his heroism but his fall was rendered inevitable because of the overwhelming odds he faced and the perseverence of an equally talented general, Khan Sahib.

The Travancore War

In 1762 when Khan Sahib was engaged in the settlement of Madurai, the chiefs of Travancore, Sivagiri, Wadagarai and Panjalamkurichi united together into a formidable confederacy. Dharma Rajah of Travancore (1758-1798) who had 16,000 troops, trained by De Lannoy, a Dutch officer, and numerous irregulars, headed the confederacy this time. This development represented a reaction against the growing influence of Khan Sahib which eliminated much of their interests in Tirunelveli. The Rajah, in particular, after extending his kingdom upto Cochin displayed an ambition to gain territories on the east coast. In November 1792 the troops of Travancore, about 16,000 strong assembled at Tovala, on the south-eastern border of the kingdom, Reinforced by the troops of the poligars of Panjalamkurichi and Pittapuram, the rebels captured a number of posts and occupied Panagudi, Ervadi and Tirukkurangudi. Dharma Rajah personally supervised these operations. Another column led by the crown prince of Travancore gathered in strength at Aryankavu on the Western Ghats and made a junction with the troops of the former poligar of Wadagarai and the Varaguna of Sivagiri. The combined forces numbering about 30,000 captured Shenkottai and invaded Wadagarai held by the troops of Khan Sahib.[86]

On learning this ominous development Khan Sahib at the command of his forces which consisted of only 1000 horse and 6000 sepoys advanced by forced marches to the southern borders. He greatly increased his strength by obtaining the assistance of the Marawas and the allied poligars.[87] After sending one army to the far south, he himself took the field in the west. His western campaign proved a brilliant success. He boldly attacked the invading columns, encamped

86. Ibid, 6 Feb. 1763, vol. 11 pp. 41-43.
87. Ibid, 1763, vol- 11 p. 135.
88. Ibid, 14 Nov. 1762, vol. 10 p. 314.
89. Ibid, 11 Nov. 1762, vol. 10 p. 299.

at Wadagarai and dispersed them in a decisive battle. The forces of Travancore and the poligars evacuated Shenkottai and Puliyara and retired to the hills.[88] After stationing two columns on the western border, he with the remaining detachments moved to Kalakkad. Before he could reach to the rescue of the columns, which he already sent to the south, the Rajah defeated it.[89] On the 14th of November he pressed upon the forces of Travancore, but the assault failed. Between the 14th of November and the 22nd of January 1763, he engaged the enemy in ten bloody actions but all of them proved indecisive.[90] The forces of Travancore held firm and constantly harassed the camp of Khan Sahib. In February he received reinforcements from different quarters, in consequence of which he embarked upon another drive against the enemy; leading to victory. Inflicting heavy lossess he obliged the Rajah's troops to evacuate all their posts and to retreat to the walls of Aramboly. Unmindful of the consequences, Khan Sahib took a forward step by carrying the war into Travancore. He captured Aramboly, advanced upto Neyyattinakarai, inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy and cut off the noses of the prisoners of war. It appeared that Travancore would fall. The Rajah was so alarmed that he made entreaties to the Nawab to protect him.[91] Finding them of no avail, he begged for quarters and submitted to the terms dictated by the triumphant invader. By the terms of the settlement signed on 21st February 1765 both the chiefs agreed to render mutual assistance against any external aggression upon their territories.[92]

Expedition of Flint and Campbell

In 1763 Khan Sahib organised a rebellion and sought to establish the independence of Madurai. However in 1764 he was defeated and executed. After this victory Mohammad Ali decided to suppress the poligars. Many of the chieftains had extended their support to Khan

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90. Ibid, 22 Jan. 1763, vol. 11 p. 46.

91. Ibid, 18 Oct. 1764, vol. 12 pp. 356-367.

The Trivandrum District Gazetteer (1962) does not mention about this humiliation of Dharma Rajah by Khan Sahib. But it contents itself with a misleading statement that Yusuf Khan invaded Travancore as the Maharajah refused assistance to the rebellion organised by the former. (*Trivandrum District Gazetteear* p. 205-206)

92. Military Country Correspondence, 16 Feb. 1765, vol. 19 p. 369.

Sahib in his rebellion, withheld payments and occupied circar villages during the rebellion. The Nawab needed money to replenish his exhausted treasury and wanted to chastise them for siding with a rebel who challenged the circar authority.

Colonel Rumley led two expeditions to Kallarnadu. He attacked the villages and killed 5000 of the tribals. The Kallans submitted and paid part of their tribute.[93] Umdut ul Umara, son of Mohammad Ali, assisted by Donald Campbell, led the forces to Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam.[94] The two palayams with their well preserved tanks and rich fields appeared flourishing because of the benevolent administration of the chiftains. On the appearance of the forces the poligar of Ariyalur fled to Wodayarpalayam. In a smart engagement at Wodyarpalayam the poligars were defeated and their territories were occupied. After this defeat the two chieftains escaped to the Danish settlement at Tarangambadi.[95]

In December 1766 Major William Flint led an army to Tirunelveli. On the 25th he attacked Kollankondan in Sivagiri but withdrew because of heavy fire from the fort. Reinforced by the Nawab's troops, he marched to Ettayapuram but found it well defended. In February 1767 he began a siege of Panjalamkurichi and occupied it, when the rebels evacuated it.[96] Yet the poligars retained control of most of the villages, they had occupied in the circar territories. In April 1767 the Wallajah and British forces launched a second campaign. Donald Campbell in command of the operations occupied Kollankondan on the 28th of April and Settur on the 3rd of May.[97] On the 10th of May the forces marched to Sivagiri, a well fortified town with 20,000 inhabitants. The Varaguna, as the ruling chief was called, with his followers evacuated the town and took his position in the inaccessible woods.[98] The invaders occupied Sivagiri and stormed the post of Vasudevanallur and Singampatti.[99] Early in June they moved to the

93. B. S. Ward, *Geographical and Statisttial Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, vol. 3 pp. 7-6.
94. Military Consultation, 10. Jan- 1765, vol. 22 p. 31.
95. Ibid, 26 Jan. 1765, vol. 22 p. 64.
96. H. R. Pate (ed.) *Tinnevelly District Gazetteer*, 1917, vol. 1 p. 76.
97. Military Consultations, 8 May, 1767, vol. 26 p. 385 & 398.
98. Ibid, 21 May 1767, vol. 26 p. 417.
99. Ibid, 8 June, 1767, vol. 26 p. 455.

hills of Sivagiri but finding the task hazardous, withdrew to Sankaranainarkoil.[100]

The poligars now sought a peaceful settlement. On an examination of the accounts Campbell was convinced that the Nawab's policy of oppression and exaction drove them to rebellion. Whereas Khan Sahib during the seven years of his administration collected from Sivagiri a total amount of 18,000 chakrams, the Nawab levied 33,000 for 1765 alone.[101] Added to this, because of Haidar Ali's incursions to the Carnatic the forces were to be rushed for the defence of the northern frontiers. Considerations of justice and expediency required a peaceful settlement. Campbell accordingly restored Sivagiri, Settur and Wadagarai to the poligars and accepted what they paid.[102] However after his return the poligars again withheld payments and extended their support to Mysore in the war against the English in 1767-1769.[103]

Fall of Ramnad and Sivaganga

In 1763 when a civil war broke out in the Marawa principalities, the Nawab decided to take advantage of the situation for the furtherance of his political designs against them. The conflict began as the result of a struggle for power that followed the death of Setupati Sella Tevar (1748-1760). Muthuramalinga, an infant, ascended the throne while Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha assumed the office of the regent and Damodara Pillai continued as minister. The struggle for power drove the regent and the minister to hostile camps. Damodara Pillai with the support of Tandavaraya Pillai, the minister of Sivaganga, occupied most of Ramanathapuram, but his attempt to capture the capital failed.[104] In December 1763 the two ministers paid a visit to Colonel Preston while he was engaged in the military operations for the suppression of the rebellion orgainsed by Khan Sahib. The Nawab advised Preston to make use of the opportunity for securing the aid of the ministers without placing much confidence in their alliance. The English general asked for their military support against

100. Ibid, 15 June 1767, vol. 26 p. 477.
101. Ibid, 17 June 1767, vol. 27 p. 874.
102. Ibid 9 Sept. 1767, vol. 27 p. 874.
103. Ibid, 30 Nov. 1767, vol. 28 p. 1365.
104. Ibid, 1 Nov. 1763, vol. 19 pp. 644-5.

Khan Sahib as a condition of his extending any support for the occupation of the fort of Ramanathapuram. The ministers accordingly assisted the British troops for the reduction of Madurai, held by Khan Sahib, to submission.

But after the fall of Madurai, neither did Mohammad Ali nor did Preston show any inclination to help the ministers. Meanwhile, the regent, for fear of the machinations of Damodara Pillai, sought the protection of Mohammed Ali. Thus the rival parties applied for the Nawab's intervention. The deceitful Mohammad Ali promised to support the regent too. On his part the regent agreed to admit two companies of the Carnatic troops, as was suggested by the Nawab, into the forts of Ramanathapuram, apparently for its defence. Had this settlement been implemented, the Nawab could have perhaps easily occupied the fort, but this was rendered impossible because of the sudden death of the regent by small pox.

On hearing the death of the regent, the ministers struck off to Ramanathapuram, without taking leave of the Nawab or Preston and pretending as if they were apprehensive of the security of their persons but really because of the fear that the Nawab would demand the payment of tribute.[105] Considering the services rendered by the ministers and fearing that the method of their departure would create an unfavourable impression upon the other allies of the Nawab, Donald Campbell who commanded the forces at Madurai sent messages with assurances that they might return in safety after taking the leave of Mohammed Ali, yet they persisted in their pretended apprehension.[106] Damodara Pillai gained the control of the capital and restored order in the country. The Nawab however did not pursue his designs either for the collection of tribute or for annexation, but waited for his chance.

In 1771 Mohammad Ali gained the support of the English for the annexation of the Marawa states. The Nawab represented to the Madras Council that the Marawa chiefs occupied circar villages, harboured the most notorious robbers in their woods and that they permitted the Dutch to establish factories without his consent. He

105. Ibid, 16 Jan. 1764, vol. 20 p. 32.

106. Ibid, 22 Dec. 1764, vol. 21 p. 906.

further asserted that despite their state of subjection, they paid no tribute, neglected to render any service for an expedition to Thanjavur[101] and that the ruling Setupati Muthuramalinga Tevar ascended the throne without his permission.[108] The Madras Council in consideration of the Company's alliance with the Nawab but without examining the merit of the case, decided to extend military assistance for the expedition. In justification of this decision the English dubbed the Marawa rulers as dangerous delinquents and declared that unless they were suppressed there was no safety to the government of the Carnatic.[109]

However, the contentions of the Nawab and the Madras Council were just allegations calculated to justify what they decided to do. The Nawab did not specify the villages if they were occupied by the Marawa chiefs. The robbers infested those jungles, where they found the greatest shelter without anybody's asking. The Marawas granted commercial facilities to the Dutch only after the English rejected a similar offer, made to Colonel Heron. Further, there existed no state of real subjection as to oblige the rulers of Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga to serve the Nawab or to pay tribute to him or to dissuade them from establishing relations with foreign powers like the Dutch.

In January 1772 the Nawab's forces entered Sivaganga and occupied Tondi, the important sea port. The Marawa troops led by Semialinga Pillai sought to expel the invaders, but were dispersed.[110] However, the Nawab suspended the operations because of the possibility of a Maratha invasion of the Carnatic.[111] In May 1772 the campaign being resumed, the combined forces of the Nawab and the Company led by Joseph Smith advanced to Ramanathapuram. The fort, equipped with a heavy cannon and fifty light guns and

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107. In September 1771 the Nawab, assisted by the English invaded Thanjavur. Rajah Tujaji was defeated and forced to cede a part of his territory and agree to pay eight lakhs of rupees as annual tribute.

108. Military Country Correspondence, 3 Nov. 1771, vol. 19 p. 247.

109. Military Despatches to England, vol. 7-9 pp. 125-127.

110. Military Country Correspondence, 4 Mar. 1772, vol. 21 p. 101-108.

111. Military Despatches to England, vol. 7-9., p. 75.

surrounded by an open space had forty four bastions and a ditch. On the 28th the army appeared before the fort before the queen knew that there was a complaint against her.[112] Another army led by Benjour advanced from Madurai to the eastern borders of Sivaganga and captured Tiruppuvanam,[113] thereby preventing the troops of Sivaganga from marching to the aid of the Setupati. The military operations were thus effectively coordinated.

Umdut ul Umara, son of Mohammed Ali, who exercised general control of the operations, opened negotiations with the queen regent for a peaceful occupation of the palayam, but it proved unfruitful. On the 1st of June Smith ordered a general siege and the next day made a breach on the walls. At 5 P.M. on the 2nd a party of grenadiers led by Major Braithwaite carried the fort by assault. A large part of the 3000 strong Marawa garrison died fighting, while the rest fled.[114] The invaders plundered the flourishing town and imprisoned the royal family including the queen-regent, her son Setupati and her two young daughters.[115]

A two pronged offensive extinguished the principality of Sivaganga too. Joseph Smith from the east and Benjour from the west invaded this palayam in June 1772. The country was very bushy of cockspur thorn, though there were villages and open spaces here and there. Rajah Udaya Tevar, in anticipation of the invasion, erected barriers on the roads, dug trenches and established posts in the woods of Kalayarkoil, Umdut ul Umara directed the Rajah to pay one lakh of

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112. Military Country Correspondence, 1772, vol. 21 p. 159.

113. Military Consultations, 1 June 1772, vol. 42 p. 448.

114. Ibid, 15 June, vol. 42 p. 479.

On the fall of the fort, Smith wrote to the Madras Council thus: "The fort of Ramnad is old, but the palace is one of the best buildings I ever saw in the country and the inhabitants lived in truly Eastern luxury which I am afraid they will never experience again. Young Marawar is about 12 years of age but the Rani has been invisible at least to Europeans. She has two daughters, both fit for matrimony. I have felt very much for the distress of these miserable people. Though there were 3000 armed men they did not know what to do or how to act being attacked in sudden." (Military Consultations, vol. 42, p. 488, Smith to Madras Council, dated 8th June 1772). The royal prisoners were sent to Tiruchirapalli.

115. Military Despatches to England, 20 June 177, vol. 7-9 pp. 80-81.

rupees, but the latter evaded, abandoned his capital town of Sivaganga and established himself in the woods.[116] On the 21st of June the detachment of Smith and Benjour effected a junction and occupied the town of Sivaganga. The next day, the forces marched to Kalayarkoil, and captured the posts of Keeranoor and Sholaveram. Now Tandavaraya Pillai, the minister of Sivaganga, sent messages to Umdut ul Umara expressing his readiness for an accommodation. Therefore, Smith wrote a letter in English directing Benjour to halt his advance until the result of negotiations was made known. But the troops of Sivaganga intercepted the letter and detained it without understanding the contents. Benjour, continuing the operations, came into conflict with the main body of the troops of Sivaganga on the 25th June. The Rajah with many of his followers fell dead in the battle. But his widow and daughter fled to Virupakshi in Dindugal, where they were joined by their two able servants Vella Marudu, the dog keeper and Chinna Marudu, the betal bearer. The invading forces plundered the town and collected jewels worth 50,000 pagodas.[117]

The Nawab, thus, won an easy victory over the Marawars and annexed these large palayams. This was rendered possible not only because of the two states were weak but also stood isolated from the other powers of South India. Still the flight of the royal family of Sivaganga to the hostile country of Mysore served as a source of trouble. The subjugation of the ruling houses did not synchronise with the surrender of the inhabitants, whose spirit of independence and loyalty to their former rulers were indeed ardent. These factors presented formidable problems to the Nawab's administration in its task of effecting consolidation.

Under the Wallajahs the poligars encountered a complicated situation, created by conflicting interests. They were required to deal with the administration of Anwar-ud-din and subsequently of Mohammad Ali, alliance of the English East India Company with the Nawab and the disturbances raised by the rival and the rebel powers. Assisted by the English, the Nawab sent expeditions against the chieftains and made a limited advance towards the consolidation of

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116. Military Consultations, 26 June 1772, vol. 42 p. 534.

117. Ibid 13 July1779, vol. 42 p. 607.

his authority. But this trend could not be sutained because of the opposition organised by the rival powers like the Nayaks and the Nevayets and the rebel powers, particularly Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib. The consequent wars spread terror and turmoil of formidable proportions in the country. This development contributed to the unprecedented expansion of the influence of the poligars. For a time Nawab instead of pursuing his policy of coercion, resorted to a policy of conciliation with a view to gain their alliance and granted them more of rights. The rival and rebel powers sought their aid and gave them concessions. More of the circar villages accepted their protection and paid taxes. However this situation did not last long. The auxiliary powers followed no uniform or common policy in relation with the new developments. For a time they rallied to the Nayaks but suffered for want of leadership. The alignment with conflicting interests threw them into opposing camps and the the resultant internal dissensions weakened them greatly. The Nawab after his victory over the rival and rebel powers again turned against them. Supported by his British ally, he resumed military operations on a large scale. This led to the suppression of several of the poligars and the annexation of the palayams of Ariyalur, Wodayarpalayam, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLIGARS AND THE ENGLISH

In 1780 the Second Mysore War (1780-84) broke out. Haidar Ali invaded the Carnatic. After making a futile attempt to storm Tiruchirapalli, he occupied Srirangam and Thanjavur and subsequently advancing to the far south captured Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai and Vasudevanallur.[1] He crowned a Nayak prince referred to as Kattu Rajah as the ruler of Madurai.[2] In the northern region of Tamilnadu he ravaged Vellore and Kanchipuram. The outbreak of war offered an opportunity to the poligars of throwing off the mask of loyalty. The Nawab's policy of annexation of the palayams, imprisonment of the chieftains, their sympathy for the Nayaks and the influence of Haidar Ali combined together in exciting poligar disturbances on a large scale. Anxious to dissuade them from joining the camp of Mysore, Mohammad Ali made an eleventh hour effort. He waived the peishkush for two years, released the poligar prisoners from confinement and assured them of due respect of their rights.[3] This policy, opportunistic as it was, had no effect upon the attitude of the chieftains. The rebellion of the poligars broke out when the different poligars returned from exile to their districts in the train of Haidar Ali's invasion. The failure of the Nawab to deal with the situation invited British intervention in the internal affairs of the country. The English gained control of the revenue administration and the right to deal directly with the auxiliary powers.

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1. Military Despatches, Madras to England, 26 Jan. 1782 vol.15 pp. 53-4.
2. Military Consultations, Madras, 4 Feb. 1781, vol.73 p.273.
3. Military Country Correspondence, Madras, 18 April 1781, vol.30 pp. 155-172.

Rebellion in Marawa States

The Wallajah policy of expansion and consolidation received a serious blow when Mohammad Ali lost control of Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga at the beginning of the Second Mysore War. Though six years had elapsed since annexation of these palayams, he did not succeed either in conciliating or in pacifying the inhabitants. The overthrow of their royal institutions and the confiscation of their lands excited wide-spread disturbances. The Maravas who were both soldiers and peasants had the unique advantage of waging a guerilla war against the enemy and returning to their fields as the circumstances demanded. Abandoning their villages and leaving their women and children in their homes, they organised themselves into armed bands, entered into an alliance with the Kallans, set up posts in the inaccessible woods and committed depredations upon the circar territories. Armed with pikes and small guns, they looted the camps of the Company's troops and threw rockets into the forts held by the Nawab's forces. The result was that by 1780 the Nawab's administration was forced to seek asylum in the fortified places.[4] A considerable part of the territory passed under the control of the rebels headed by Mappila Tevar, the uncle of the Setupati[5].

Meanwhile Tandavaraya Pillai, the former dewan of Sivaganga, sought the aid of Haidar Ali for the restoration of this state to the house of Udaya Tevar who died in battle. The Mysore chief promised assistance for the liberation of the Marawa states,[6] but Tandavaraya Pillai died within a few months. After his death the Marudu brothers, Vella Marudu and Chinna Marudu took the lead in the affairs of the occupied territory. When Haidar Ali fell upon Arcot in 1780, the Marudus having obtained a small force from Syed Sahib, the commander of the Mysore forces stationed at Dindugal, desolated the Nawab's territories extending to the very gate of Madurai.[7] Upon their entry into Sivaganga, the inhabitants joined them en masse and the rebellion spread. The ill disciplined forces of the Nawab stationed in walled

4. Ibid, 2 Oct. 1772, vol.21 p.236.
5. Correspondence on the Permanet Settlement of the Southern Pollams and Ramnad and Shevagunga Zamindaries, p.28.
6. Military Country Correspondence, 12 Dec. 1772, vol.21 pp. 282-3.
7. Correspondence on the Permanent Settlement dated 24th Dec. 1800, p.28.

towns could offer no effective resistance. The rebels proclaimed Vellachi, the daughter of Udaya Tevar, as the ruler of the palayam and the Marudus assumed the charge as ministers in the new regime.[8] This development marked a significant victory for the poligars over the Nawab and his ally the English Company.

The success of the rebellion in Sivaganga came as a source of encouragement to the rebels of Ramanathapuram. Mappila Tevar obtained the assistance of Haidar Ali and expelled the Nawab's troops from the territory. The state was torn to pieces, but the struggle of a people who cherished an unbroken spirit of independence triumphed ultimately.[9] In an attempt to curb the growing influence of the rebels, Mohammad Ali released Muthuramalinga Tevar, the deposed Setupati and a young man of twenty, from confinement at Tiruchirapalli and proclaimed him the Setupati on the 7th of April 1781.[10] Supported by the forces of the Nawab, the prince expelled the rebel chiefs and took possession of the country for himself. Mappilla Tevar with his followers thereupon joined Haidar Ali.[11] Muthuramalinga Tevar, now carried away by territorial ambition, sought the annexation of Sivaganga. He offered to pay three and a half lakhs of rupees as the annual peishkush for the two states and won the Nawab's approval for their unification under his administration.[12] He also proposed to marry princess Vellachi of Sivaganga, but the latter turned down his offer and wedded Wodaya Tevar, a nephew of her father. The vindictive Setupati with the connivance of Mohammad Ali made repeated attempts to incorporate Sivaganga with Ramanathapuram; but neither did he succeed in occupying any part of that state nor did he fulfil the terms of his agreement with the Nawab.[13]

The Mysore War and the Marava rebellion gave the signal to the spread of the disturbances to several palayams, taken over by the Nawab. The circar administration was so oppressive that the

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8. Ibid, p.27.
9. Tinnevelly Book, 1782 Letter No. 2.
10. Military Consultations, 30 April 1781, vol.74 p.1076.
11. Ibid, 5 Aug. 1781, vol.75 p.1180.
12. Ibid, 24 Jan. 1792 vol.158, p.474.
13. Procedings of the Board of Assigned Revenue, 24 Jan. 1792 Vol.8 p·338.

inhabitants waited for an opportunity to throw off the system of exaction. In Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam they were not only required to pay four times of what they were paying traditionally as tax but also were subjected to torture and death in the event of any default. Greatly distressed, the people demanded the restoration of the poligari system.[14] Taking advantage of the Mysorean incursions, the former chieftains of Ariyalur and Wodayarpalayam returned from Tarangambadi, where they had taken shelter for long. The inhabitants rallied to their cause, rose in rebellion and expelled the troops of the Nawab from the territory. The Kallans in the mean time made inroads to Madurai and occupied Melur, Vellaloor and Serugudi.[15] Varaguna of Sivagiri and Kattabomman of Panjalamkurichi too raised the banner of revolt and upheld the cause of the Nayaks.[16] Assisted by the western poligars, the Varaguna attacked and defeated the Nawab's detachment, led by James Eidington, and captured Srivalliputtur.[17] Kattabomman entered into a close alliance with the Dutch and made incursions in the circar territories. The insurgents occupied the circar villages and threw the Nawab's forces on the defensive. So wide spread were these disturbances that Reverend C. F. Swartz of the Danish Lutheran Mission observed: "it seemed as if all the country people wished for a change, Worriorpaliam, Marawar, Tinnevelly Country, Madura were all up in arms."[18]

The Assignment

The hostile attitude of the poligars, the mounting disorders and the consequent defalcation of the resources rendered the conduct of war against Mysore a difficult task. Convinced that only a change in the administration would extricate the English from this embarrassing situation, Lord Macartney (1781—85) Governor of Fort St. George, prevailed upon Mohammad Ali to agree to the needed change. A settlement signed on the 2nd of December 1781 provided for the transfer of the revenue administration from the

14. B.S. Ward, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, vol, 3 p.8.
15. Military Consultations, 30 Aug. 1781, vol.76 p.2374.
16. Ibid, 17 Jan. 1769, vol.40 p.93.
17. Military Country Correspondence, 18 April 1781, vol, 30 pp. 155-172.
18. Rev. Swartz, letter dated 19 Dec. 1780, quoted in '*A History of Pudukkottai*" p.161.

Nawab to the Company for a period of five years and the allotment of one sixth of the annual collections for the private expenses of the Nawab. This was called the assignment. Incidentally this settlement placed the poligars under the direct jurisdiction of the English in all matters affecting revenue.

As administrators of assigned revenue the English made an earnest endeavour to gain two fold objective—loyalty of the poligars and their submission to the authority of the Company. In pursuance of this policy they relied upon the conventional policy of conciliation and coercion. The Company appointed the former poligars of Wodayarpalayam and Ariyalur as the renters of their respective districts. In return these chieftains abandoned their alliance with Sultan Tipu and extended their allegiance to the English. The rents were fixed at 8,000 pagodas for Ariyalur and 35,000 pagodas for Wodayarpalayam.[19] Subsequently, however, when the payment of rent fell into arrears, the Company assumed the direct administration and imprisoned the chieftains at Tiruchirapalli.[20] In 1784 the English accorded recognition to the ruling houses of the Marawa states. The Company fixed the tribute of Ramanathapuram at a 2,80,000 rupees and that of Sivaganga at 2,20,000 rupees.[21] Palamaneri, occupied by the Nawab, was restored to Ramanathapuram and Tiruppuvanam to Sivaganga.[22] In an attempt to gain the confidence of the chieftains, they were relieved from the renters' jurisdiction, which occasioned oppressive exactions, and placed under the direct authority of the newly constituted Committee of Assigned Revenue. Thus for the first time the poligars were placed under the direct administration of a western power.

However the warlike poligars of the far south remained unreconciled to the British authority. During the war with Mysore they occupied circar villages and seized the revenue in co-operation with the forces of Haidar Ali. Therefore in July 1783 after the withdrawal of

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19. Collector's Report on the Deposed Poligars of Udaiarpalayam, Ariyalur and Turaiyur, 1816, p.2.
20. Military Country Correspondence, 14 Oct. 1790, vol.40 pp. 132-133.
21. Military Consultations, 24 Jan. 1792, vol. 158 pp. 475-75.
22. Ibid, 13 June 1782, vol.80 p.1883.

the army of Mysore from Tamilnadu, Governor Lord Macartney (1781-85) sent a powerful expedition. Colonel William Fullarton, who commanded the forces, marched from Tiruchirapalli to Kallarnadu. He threatened the Kallans with fire and sword and compelled them to pay tribute.[23] The invading forces established military posts to keep them in constant subjection. On the 4th of August the army advanced to Sivaganga. Chinna Marudu, the minister, assembled his armed men in the woods of Kalayarkoil in preparation for resistance. Yet considering the demands not arbitrary, he agreed to a settlement and paid 40,000 rupees in clearance of a part of the arrears. Kattabomman in command of 4000 irregulars lay in wait for the enemy at Chocumpatti. Fullarton, on the other hand, taking a circuitous route through Palamaneri surprised Panjalamkurichi. The rebels repulsed the attack, yet considering the insecurity of the broken citadel, evacuated it and led by their chief joined Sivagiri.[24] After gaining possession of Panjalamkurichi, the army decided to attack Sivagiri in its bid to convince the western poligars of the dreadful consequence of defiance and to compel them to pay tribute. During the Mysore War the Varaguna of Sivagiri cut off a detachment and killed Captain Graham Campbell. Now in alliance with Kattabomman he made preparations for defence, but was overwhelmed. The enemy occupied Sivagiri and moved to the woods, where the rebels got themselves entrenched. On the approach of the forces, the poligar together with his followers climbed up the lofty heights. Despite the odds attending a mountain warfare, the assailants, guided by the poligars of Chocumpatti, reached the summits through a secret path and dispersed the rebel columns.[25] By a settlement made at Srivalliputtur Kattabomman and Varaguna cleared part of the arrears and gave bonds for the rest as condition for the restoration of their palayams.[26] As the result of the military operations and financial settlements the influence of the poligars suffered a serious reverse. In fact the British forces were so severe that their harsh measures left the chiefs with no resources whatsoever for rebuilding their military strength for years to come. Yet the adminis-

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23. B.S. Ward, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of Madura and Dindigul*, vol.3 p.9.

25. Military Consultations, 10 July, 1792, vol.163 p.2938.

26. Military Sundries, 13 Aug. 1784, vol.66 p.71.

tration made no attempt either to disarm the chieftains or to curtain their traditional rights.[27]

Intervention in Sivaganga

In 1785 in consequence of the end of the Mysore War and the vigorous effort made by Mohammad Ali, the Company surrendered the assignment. Inspite of this, by the treaties of 1785 and 1787 the English reduced the Carnatic into a protectorate under the guise of a joint system of defence. In relations with the English the Nawab made serious compromises with his sovereignty, yet he decided to suppress more of the poligars.

Soon after the restoration of his administration by the Company, he invigorated the process of exaction. He enhanced his demands on the Marawas: Ramnad submitted, but Sivaganga resisted. Determined to suppress the Marudus, the Nawab in 1756 sought military assistance from Fort St. George on the alleged ground that the Marudus refused the payment of the tribute of two lakhs of rupees, that they neglected the administration of their territory and that they committed depredations upon Ramanathapuram. But Governor, Sir Archibald Campbell, surprised at Mohammad Ali's attitude towards a vassal state that was restored to him in good order at the surrender of the assignment, rightly cautioned the Nawab that it was a dangerous measure to collect revenue by the force of arms and asserted that such a policy not only alienated the subject but caused a heavy military expenditure.[28] Yet Mohammad Ali refusing to retrace his steps decided to achieve by intrigue what he failed to win with the British co-operation.

The situation appeared favourable to the Nawab when a serious rivalry between the Queen and the Marudus for the control of administration disturbed the tranquillity of the territory and weakened its power of resistance. He entered into an agreement with the Rani and promised his assistance in her conflict with the Marudus.[29] This

27. Proceedings of the Board of Assigned Revenue, 22 June 1785, vol.9 p.494.
28. Military Country Correspondence, 1786, vol.35 pp. 209-210.
29. Military Consultations, 26 May 1789, vol. 129 p. 1459.

precipitated a clash, but contrary to what the Nawab had anticipated, the princess was forced to seek shelter in the fort of Sivaganga. Mohammad Ali promptly despatched a body of troops for the rescue of the Queen. But the Marudus with 12,000 armed men surrounded Sivaganga and plundered the Nawab's territories in retaliation. Unable to suppress the Marudus, the Nawab on the 10th March of 1789 again appealed to the Madras Council for aid. John Holland, the successor of Sir Archibald Campbell in the governorship, accordingly furnished military assistance.[30]

On the 29th April 1789 the British expedition led by Colonel Stuart reached Tirupatore in Sivaganga.[31] A body of Tondaiman's troops, 3,000 strong, joined the Company's army on the 1st of May.[32] Reinforced by the Nawab's detachment led by Col. Martinz, the forces attacked Kallangudi on the 13th of May. A large village surrounded by mud walls and thick jungles, it was defended by a body of Marudu's troops armed with fire-locks. Despite the obstinate resistance of the rebels, the forces carried the lines on the 14th. After this reverse, the Marudus retired to their strongholds in the jungle of Kalayarkoil.[33] On the arrival of more forces from Madurai, Thanjavur and Tiruchirapalli, Stuart launched an offensive against the rebel posts in the woods. With considerable labour the pioneers cut a road to Ramamandalam, a square-work of great extent, situated three miles away from Kallangudi. Stuart won the allegiance of Du Pre, a treaherous Frrnch general whom the Marudus employed to train their troops, and occupied the rebel strong-hold. The thorough knowledge of the terrain possessed by Du Pre considerably helped further military operations against the rebels. The forces advanced to Kalayarkoil and captured it after a short cannonade.[34] The Marudus took their stand at Piranmalai, but on the approach of the enemy fled with precipitation to the territory of Sultan Tipu.[35]

The Nawab sought to consolidate his gains. He repaired and garrisoned Tirupatore, the key to Sivaganga, with his own troops,

30. Ibid, 17 Mar. 1789, vol. 128 p.783.
31. Ibid 5 May, 1789, vol. 129 p.1336.
32. Ibid, 6 May 1789, vol. 129 p.1345.
33. Ibid, 21 May 1789, vol.129 p.1406.
34. Ibid, 7 June 1789, vol.129 pp.1552-6.
35. Ibid, 16 June 1789, vol.130 p.1683.

destroyed the barriers erected by the insurgents, cleared the roads which had been blocked and estabilished new military posts. The land returned to order apparently; in consequence of which the troops of the Company evacuated it.[36] However the myth of the Nawab's triumph vanished in November 1789, when the Marudus with a large body of their followers returned to Sivaganga and swept off the Wallajah posts. They routed the Nawab's detachment, stationed at Tirupatore and carried the fort. The inhabitants revolted to their chiefs as in a spontaneous movement and expelled the troops of the Nawab from their territory. For fear that the Marudus would seek the alliance of Tipu Sultan, the Madras government now advised Mohammad Ali to settle terms with the rebels. Accordingly the Nawab granted peace but fixed the peishkush at an enhanced rate of three lakhs of rupees. While the Marudus continued as ministers, Wodaya Tevar who married princess Vellachi assumed the rajahship.[37] In 1791 the new Rajah represented to the Company which administered the country during this period by virtue of assumption, for a reduction of tribute. The Madras Council agreeing to the representation, fixed the peishkush at the original sum of 1,75,000 rupees.[38] Sivaganga reasserted its status as a palayam and the Nawab's policy proved a failure.

The Carnatic Treaty of 1792

In 1790 when the Third Mysore War broke out the English without the consent of the rulers of the Carnatic and Thanjavur assumed the administration of revenue of their territories. This was the assumption. However in 1792, when the war ended, they gave up assumption and restored the administration of these states to their rulers. As condition for effecting this restoration, the Nawab of the Carnatic and the Rajah of Thanjavur were required to accept new treaties, formula-

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36. Ibid, 26 June 1789, vol.130 p.1792.

    Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore disapproved the policy of the Madras Council on the ground that it was irreconcilable with the principles of justice and moderation. Besides they pointed out that considering the hostile disposition of Tipu Sultan and size of the army that was to be employed for the service, the expedition to Sivaganga was an enterprise full of hazard. (Military Consultations, dated 20th Oct. 1789; Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore to Madras Council, dated 25th Sept. 1789.)

37. Military Consultaions, 24 June, 1792, vol.155 p.474.

38. Ibid, 16 Nov. 1791, vol.154, p.5812.

ted in favour of promoting the British influence. The Carnatic Treaty of 1792 and the annexation of Dindugal from Mysore brought the different poligars under the direct authority of the Company on a regularised basis.

The Fifth Article of the Treaty of 1792 stipulated that the Company would have the right to collect the customary tribute from the poligars and to enhance the demand on them, if on enquiry there appeared that they had to pay an amount larger than what they usually paid by virtue of any lawful engagements. At the same time the Sixth Article laid down that the Company, desirous of preserving the Nawab's rights of sovereignty over the poligars, would engage to the utmost of their power and consistent with the realisation of tribute to enforce the allegiance and submission of these chieftains to the Nawab in regard to customary ceremonies and established practice of furnishing the services of their peons for the collection of taxes, support of his administration and protection of the inhabitants' property. The poligars were thus required to serve two masters. Their duties to the Nawab were: to attend on the durbar for customary ceremonies, to render military service and to perform village-watch. On the other hand their responsibility to the Company required them to pay tribute. The first category of service entitled them to maintain their armed strength and the second category to hold possession of their territories. In consequence the poligars retained their influence intact. At the same time, the Nawab and the Company restricted each other in the exercise of definite authority over the poligars. It seemed that the English undertook to guard the proper working of the poligari system in its relation with the sovereign and more significantly they gained a definite right to increase the tribute under the plea that the chieftains possessed more of the estimated resources.

The terms and conditions under which the poligars were transferred to the British authority proved incompatible with the objects of the policy on which they were founded. They retained, as it was natural for them to do, a strong desire to evercise military and independent power. In the view of the English administrators as the chieftains were permitted to retain their armed forces, their conduct continued to be aggressive. They engaged in mutual conflicts and defied the

Company's authority whenever they found it possible.[39] To add to the trouble, the Nawab's amuldars misled the poligars to believe that the settlement of 1792 was a temporary arrangement and that they would be brought back under the circar administration. They encouraged the chieftains to defy the British authority and to pay no tribute.[40] These factors embarrassed the Company's administration. The English found it impossible to interfere in the disputes or complaints not connected with the professed object of the settlement of 1792, for fear that any other conduct would expose them to conflict with the Nawab's sovereignty.[41] In an attempt to remove the anomaly created by the Treaty of 1792 and to introduce for its object an entire control of the auxiliary powers, the Madras Council made repeated representations to Mohammad Ali, requesting his consent for a modification of the settlement. But the Nawab, adamant to preserve his sovereign rights, paid no heed to the request.[42] However, after the accession of Umdut ul Umara on the death of his father Mohammed Ali on the 13th of October 1795, the Madras Council found an opportunity to assert itself but rather unconstitutionally. It directed the poligars to obey no instructions of the Nawab unless they proceeded through the government of Fort St. George.[43]

The dual system also infused ill-felling in the relations of the poligars with the English. As under the feudal set up the Nawab collected presents from the chieftains on different occasions. After 1789 the amuldars, denied of the right to collect the customary tribute, lost no opportunity in exacting presents under numerous pretexts. Their exactions and armed interventions proved a potential source of constant trouble. As they paid tribute to the Company, they looked upon it for protection; but the English refused to defend the poligars' interests as the sovereign rights of the Nawab came in the way. At the same time, the chieftains could not appeal to arms, as the English undertook to enforce the obedience of the chiefs to the circar.[44]

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39. Political Despatches to England, 29 Sept. 1794, vol.2. pp. 316-8.
40. Military Consultations, 16 Oct. 1792, vol.167 p.5109.
41. Political Despatches to England, 29 Sept. 1794, vol.2 pp. 316-8.
42. Military Country Correspondence 10 May 1795, vol.46 p.55.
43. Political Despatches to England, 25 Feb. 1796 vol.5 pp. 89-91.
44. Revenue Consultations, 14 Dec. 1796, vol.91 p.4729.

This anomaly kept the poligars denied of the shield of protection as well as the right of self-defence. To add to their embarrassment, the English frequently surveyed the palayams and enhanced the tribute under the plea that the poligars possessed more of the resources than what had been estimated so long. This exposed them to alien exploitation. As the chieftains held the English responsible for their predicament, their subsequent resistance to authority assumed definitely anti-British overtones.

The Issue of Sivagiri and Ramanathapuram

The question of the possession of Sivagiri and Ramanathapuram after their fall into British arms furnishes instances when the interests of the Nawab and the English came into conflict with each other. It came as a natural consequence of the contraditions in the dual system of control.

During the Third Mysore War, when the English withdrew their forces from Tirunelveli, the poligars as was usual to give vent to their resentment, withheld payments and made incursions into the circar territories. Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General, expressed the view that seldom would the poligars commit acts of violence without provocation. At his instructions Torin, the Company's Collector of Assumed Revenue, made an enquiry to ascertain whether they had any just cause of complaint. After an investigation, the Collector hastily concluded that the disturbances should be attributed to their turbulent disposition. Still, the Madras Council decided to treat them with forbearance as the army in the meantime was employed against Mysore.[45]

However, in May 1792 the aggressions committed by Sivagiri on the palayam of Settur precipitated an armed intervention by the Company. Chinna Tambi Varaguna, the poligar of Sivagiri, after his futile struggle against Fullarton, sought to rebuild his strength and to expand his territory. He annexed the palayams of Puli Tevar and Tomachi Nayak with the connivance of Etabar Khan, the Nawab's amuldar at Tirunelveli.[46] Subsequently, the poligar entered into a

45. Political Despatches to England, 16 Jan. 1792, vol.2 p.4.

46. Military Consultations, 30 Oct. 1792, vol.168 p.5479.

conflict with the ruling chief of Settur. Suspecting that the poligar of Settur organised a plot for the invasion of Sivagiri and taking advantage of a boundary dispute, the Varaguna with 2000 men invaded that palayam on the 28th of May and killed the young poligar.[47] The invaders invested the nephew of the dead chief as the next poligar of Settur.[48] Torin summoned the Varaguna to explain his conduct but the latter refused. Thereupon Lord Cornwallis, who had been engaged in commanding the operations against Mysore, sent a strong detachment against Sivagiri.[49] On the 10th of May Colonel Maxwell in command of the expedition moved against the defiant poligar. The rebels evacuated the town and took their stand on the hights of the rolling hills, the bottom of which was entirely occupied by the bed of a stream running through a very steep and rocky channel. The invading forces discovered a narrow path, constructed by the rebels with enormous labour, advanced through the declivity of the hills to a great range of stupendous mountains and assaulted one barrier after the other. With unwearied perseverence the insurgents maintained their successful retreat and at noon on the 12th of August 4000 of them were found still climbing up the steep ranges. Considering the task hazardous, Maxwell withdrew to the plains. However one of the parties employed by him seized the Varaguna on the 28th of August and handed him over to the British camp.[50]

The Company held an enquiry into the conduct of the poligar but acquitted him of the charge of his personal responsibility for the murder of the chief of Settur. Considering however that the violent attack on this palayam by his armed men and the total disregard shown to the Collector's order for attendance constituted an outrage committed in contempt of British authority, the Madras Council decided to take over the possession of Sivagiri. The Nawab, on the other hand, called upon the British administration to hand over the possession of the palayam to his circar, citing his sovereign rights over the poligars. This unexpected requisition embarrassed the English, yet in view of the obligations imposed by the Treaty of 1792 they agreed to comply

47. Ibid, 15 June 1792, vol.163 p.2603.
48. Ibid, 31 July 1792, vol.164, p.3460.
49. Ibid, 22 June 1792, vol.163 p.2703.
50. Ibid, 7 Sept. 1792, vol.166, p.4429.

with after the establishment of order in the district.[51] The issue was now referred to the Supreme Government at Calcutta for its decision. Lord Cornwallis observed that it was essential to avoid giving an impression that the English were carrying on a traffic of making and unmaking of rulers for promoting their interests in India. He directed the restoration of the palayam to the Varaguna. Though this decision was dictated by political considerations, it defeated the realisation of the ambition of Mohammad Ali and of the Madras Council.[52]

After his return from Sivagiri Maxwell led his forces to Panjalamkurichi. Vira Pandyan, the young poligar, submitted and paid tribute.[53] Maxwell felt that the fate of Sivagiri and Panjalamkurichi would convince the chieftains of other palayams of the folly of resistance. But the inconsistency in the conduct of the poligars led Maxwell to suspect of some legitimate grievances. Upon enquiry it was understood that the haughty behaviour of Velloo, the dubash of Collector Torin and his refusal to accept tribute drove the chieftains into rebellion. The Madras Council now placed Velloo in confinement and released the imprisoned poligars.[54] Still James Landon, who succeeded Collector Torin, suggested the necessity of disarming the poligars on the ground that the source of all trouble lay in their military strength, but the Madras Council restricted by the Nawab's sovereignty over them found it impossible to carry out this drastic reform.[55]

After Sivagiri the Nawab's sovereignty and the Company's authority came into conflict over the possession of Ramanathapuram. Because of his failure to incorporate Sivaganga with this territory through a matrimonial alliance, Setupati Muthuramalinga Tever fell out with the Marudus. He closed the road leading from Tondi to Tirunelveli, depriving Sivaganga of much of the collection of customs. In retaliation the Marudus diverted a stream flowing from Sivaganga to Ramanathapuram. The two sides now armed against each other, drew several of the fellow poligars to their sides and entered into a

51. Political Despatches to England, 30 Jan. 1793, vol.2 pp. 134-151.
52. Military Consultations 9 Oct. 1792, vol.167 p.4860.
53. Ibid, 2 Nov. 1792, vol.168 p.5620.
54. Political Despatches to England, 30 Jan.1793, vol.2 pp.139-151.
55. Revenue Consultations, Sept. 1793, vol.52, p.2003.

bitter contest. The Madras Council restricted by the Nawab's sovereignty over the Marawa states, did not seek to nip the trouble in its bud.[56] In consequence the war continued and the two powers fought bloody battles at Paramagudi,[57] Arandoo and Aunundoor, but neither side winning any decisive victory.[58] The forces of Ramanathapuram set fire to 150 villages in Sivaganga, while the troops of Sivaganga devastated Paramagudi.[59]

Concerned at the magnitude of atrocities, the Madras Council and the Nawab ultimately intervened. Landon, the Company's Collector of Poligar Peishcush, directed the Setupati and the Sherogar to discontinue the war. As a compromise measure he suggested to the Setupati to re-open the road and the Sherogar to allow the flow of the stream as usual.[60] Chinna Marudu complied with the instructions, but Muthuramalinga Tevar trifled. Thereupon the Nawab warned the Setupati that his conduct would involve him in lasting ruin,[61] in consequence of which the troops of Ramanathapuram too withdrew from the war.[62] Powney, the successor of Landon in the collectorship, directed the Setupati to attend on him for an explanation of his conduct, but the latter refused.[63] More developments strained the relations of Ramanathapuram with the Company. In 1794 a severe famine visited the southern region, particularly the Marawa states. The Madras Council directed the Setupati and the Sherogar to exempt the imported grain from the levy of duties for affording relief to the starving masses. The Sherogar gave ready attention but the Setupati unmindful of the welfare of his people not only continued collection, but forced the ryots to relinquish what they had.[64] On the 27th of August 1794 Mangaleswari Nauchiyar, who claimed as the sister[65] of

56. Political Despatches to England, 29 Sept. 1794, vol.3 pp.3168.
57. Military Consultations, 1 July 1794, vol.187 p.2757.
58. Ibid, 6 June 1794, vol.186 p.2263.
59. Ibid, 17 June 1794, vol.186 p.2362.
60. Ibid, 1 July 1794 vol.187 p.2757.
61. Military Country Correspondence, 23 June 1794, vol.45 p.198.
62. Military Consultations, 6 July 1794, vol.167 p.2992.
63. Military Country Correspondence, 26 Sept. 1794, vol.45, p.327.
64. Ibid, 7 Mar. 1794, vol.45 p.28.
65. Mangaleswari Nauchiyar claimed as the sister of Muthuramalinga Tevar by the same father Vijayaraghunatha Tevar. But it was asserted that she was

the Setupati, in a representation asserted that Muthuramalinga Tevar treated her with cruelty, oppressed the people and impoverished the country. Characterising him as the most depraved amongst mankind, she complained that he was surrounded by the vilest wretches upon whose report "daughters were torn from the bosom of their parents and wives dragged from the arms of their husbands, and conveyed to his house, where they were detained during his pleasure and some who have made resistance to his will have been put to death" and that the most respectful families in order to preserve the chastity of their women against his vevolin fled the country or committed suicide. These charges appeared as those of an interested princess, who aspired the throne for herself, yet the records of the period indicate that the young Setupati gave no great regard to the lives of the people. The Sivaganga war caused the death of 1200 people, while many more died of famine.[66] In May 1794 the old Nawab Mohammad Ali represented to Governor Sir Oakeley that Muthuramalinga Tevar was a man of such savage disposition that he felt no remorse in taking away the lives of his people and that he gave no consideration to the circar. Anxious to gain possession of the territory, he sought British aid for the overthrow of the Setupati.[67] In short, the abuse of power, the war with Sivaganga, oppression of his people and above all the machinations of Mangaleswari Nauchiyar and Mohammad Ali induced the Company to take military action against Ramanathapuram.[68]

In February, 1795 before the Setupati anticipated any hostile move, the Company's force led by Major Stevenson moved into his territory. It would have been possible for the Setupati to assemble not less than 10,000 well armed men at a short notice, but the sudden appearance of the army took him by surprise. Encountering no opposi-

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born to her mother by another husband before her marriage with Vijayaraghunatha Tevar. (Military Consultations, 30 Dec. 1794, vol.191 p.5085).

66. Ibid, 27, Aug. 1794.

67. Ibid, 7 Oct. 1794, vol.45 p.348.

68. Ibid, 28 May 1794 vol.45 p.153.

The clarification of these causes holds as incorrect a statement in the Ramnad Manual that it was not clear what were the circumstances which led to the deposition of Setupati (*Ramnad Manual*, p. 244). Mutturamalinga Tevar died at Madras in 1801. (*Ramnad Manual*, p. 248).

tion, Major Stevenson occupied the fort on the 8th of May.[69] He deposed Muthuramalinga Tevar, sent him to Tiruchirapalli as prisoner and established the British authority. The Madras Council granted a monthly allowance of 1,000 rupees for the support of the Setupati[70] and issued a proclamation explaining his misconduct and promising security to the inhabitants.[71]

With a view to consolidate their rule, the English entrusted the administration of the territory with the Collector of the Poligar Peishcush and introduced several reforms. The troops of all descriptions were orgainsed into regular forces, controlled and paid by the Company.[72] The collection of customs which appeared oppressive and the levy of impositions which checked the progress of trade were discontinued.[73] Village settlement was enforced in a bid to improve the administration of revenue. The Madras Council looked upon these measures as the foundation upon which an extensive and permanent system might be formed for the administration of all the poligar territories.[74]

However, Nawab Umdut-ul-Umara annoyed at these proceedings of the Company, directed the Madras Council in 1795 to hand over the control of Ramanathapuram to his circar. The English agreed to give credit to the Nawab for the net revenue of the palayam, but refused to comply with his demand. Besides, to give no room for the Nawab's pretensions and to conciliate the inhabitants, the Company decided the succession in favour of Mangaleswari Nauchiyar and appointed her to hold the title of Setupati.[75] Umdut ul Umara questioned the right of the English to determine the issue of succession and he asserted that it legally belonged to him.[76] Still the Company's will prevailed and it retained possession of a territory yielding an annual

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69. Political Despatches to England, 4 Mar. 1795 vol. 2 pp. 339-40.
70. Radha Krishna Iyer, *A General History of the Pudukkottai State*, p. 297.
71. Political Despatches to England, 23 April 1795, vol. 2 pp. 351-2.
72. Ibid, 2 Oct. 1795, vol.3 pp.11-12.
73. Revenue Consultations, 15 Oct. 1798, vol.89 p.3453.
74. Ibid, 14 Dec. 1798. vol.91 p.4729.
75. Revenue Consultations, 4 July 1795, vol.64 pp. 2541-55.
76. Political Despatches to England, 4 Mar. vol.2 pp. 338-340.

revenue of seven lakhs of rupees. The Nawab's rights suffered a reverse in this round of struggle too against the English; the most powerful of the palayams passed under the rule of the Company.

Extinction of Tiruchi Palayams

Despite the Nawab's failure to obtain possession of Sivagiri and Ramanathapuram, he asserted his rule over the palayams of Wodayarpalayam, Ariyalur and Turaiyur. The chieftains of these districts, formerly poligars, but later on renters did not fall under the revenue jurisdiction of the Company as they were not tributaries. This permitted the Nawab to have a free hand in dealing with them. The chiefs of Wodyarpalayam and Ariyalur since their success in obtaining the rentership of their former territories during the Second Mysore War, always sought to reassert their status as poligars. In pursuit of their objective they in 1790, when the Third Mysore War broke out, withheld payments. The Board of Assumed Revenue sent a detachment to the palayams and brought them as prisoners to Tiruchirapalli. Therefore the inhabitants revolted. In 1792 Mohammad Ali, seeking to destroy their influence, condemned them as public rebbers and removed them to Wodayarpalayam, perhaps because he felt that he could hold them in public ridicule. It was extraordinary that he took them to the place where their influence was concentrated. Contrary to his expectations he found it impossible to collect revenue without the assistance of those very chieftains, whom he stigmatised as public robbers.[77] One night 10,000 of the inhabitants surrounded the fort, surprised the garrison and released their leaders. The chief of Wodayarpalayam went to Madras and squandered away large sums on the Nawab's durbar in his futile bid to obtain possession of the district. The chief of Ariyalur, on the other hand, fled to Thanjavur. 1796 the two chiefs returned to their districts and excited a rebellion which with violence and success continued for two years. Still the Nawab did not concede victory to thc rebels, but re-established order by a two-fold policy of coercion and conciliation. The Wallajah army led by Major Cuppage suppressed the disturbances in May 1797.[78] Subsequently he made a settlement with the leaders of Wodayarpalayam

77. Military Consultations, 22May 1797, vol.221 pp. 3060-78.

78. Military Consultations, 22 May 1797, vol.221 pp. 3060-78.

and Ariyalur by which he retained possession of the districts, but granted them monthly allowances of 1,000 rupees and 750 rupees respectively and the right to collect the kaval fees as was customary.[79]

Turaiyur, the other major palayam in Tiruchirapalli, had been torn asunder by prolonged disorders. In 1773 the ruling poligar, a Reddi, in accordance with the practice of the times, made over the management of his territory to his son, the young Reddi. But on the death of his wife, he married a second time and a second son was born. Induced by his second wife, the poligar decided to persuade his son to surrender the management of the district, failing which to murder him. Having obtained information of the plot the young Reddi in 1785 proceeded to Madras and presented his case before the Nawab. This gave the signal to the upward revision of the tribute. Mohammad Ali approved the claims of the young Reddi, but enhanced the tribute from Rs. 1,50,000 to 1,75,000. The next year he sent an army to Turaiyur and reinstated the young Reddi. The old Reddi who was removed to Madras, now offered to pay Rs. 2,00,000. In consequence in 1787 the Nawab replaced the son by the father. After two years the young Reddi made a present of 1,00,000 rupees to Mohammad Ali and again obtained possession of the district, agreeing to pay the amount which his father offered. These repeated changes in authority and burdensome payments exhausted the resources of the district, preventing the young Reddy from paying the tribute. In 1793 the old Reddi consented to pay 2,75,000 rupees as annual tribute and recovered possession of the territory. The Nawab knew the inability of the chief to pay the promised amount, still he reappointed him, with the object of imputing bad faith on the poligar in the event of default in payment and of annexing the territory. In 1795 to the exultation of the Nawab, the tribute fell in arrears. Thereupon he promptly threw both the father and the son into prison and occupied the district. The two Reddis, however, made their escape, arrived at a compromise which at an earlier time might have saved them from total ruin, and uniting their broken fortunes, fled to Thanjavur. Soon afterwards death relieved the old Reddi from his ordeal. In 1796 when the disturbances broke out in Wodayarpalayam, the young Reddi retur-

79. Collector's report on the Deposed Poligars of Udayarpalapam, Ariyalur and Turaiyur, 1816, pp. 1-2.

ned to Turaiyur and organised a serious rebellion. The rebels destroyed the water courses, burned down the villages and obliged the inhabitants to desert the villages. Convinced of the necessity of promoting the settlement of the deserted district, the Nawab Umdut ul Umara offered terms. He retained possession of the palayam, but granted a monthly allowance of 1,000 rupees to the chief and permitted him to levy an assessment of the amount of twenty five per cent of the net revenue upon all land holdings.[80] Subsequently, the chiefs of the three palayams sought British protection, but the Madras Council took no notice of it.[81] These developments marked the extinction of the major palayams of Tiruchirapalli.

Under the dual system that prevailed since 1780 the Nawab consolidated his rule over the palayams of Tiruchirapalli while the English established their rule over Ramanathapuram. However, the situation continued to deteriorate. With the increasing bankruptcy of the administration, the country passed progressively under the control of the usurers and exhortioners; in consequence of which the revenue continued to sink. The political atmosphere too remained unfavourable. The vindictive Tipu Sultan, feeling humiliated at the defeat he suffered, made hasty preparations, aimed at retrieving his tarnished prestige. The Dutch and the French in the mean time built up their military strength in Ceylon for a possible invasion of Tamilnadu. The Company now was convinced that the financial burdens imposed upon the rulers and the poligars would react adversely against its own interests, for it stood to gain nothing substantial in the event of an assumption of an impoverished country. The Madras Council therefore sought to expand the jurisdiction by a modification of the existing settlements in an attempt to rectify this anomaly. Based upon a report of a special commission it took the view that: the inconvenience arising to the government of the Carnatic from the indefinite and oppressive exercise of the power of the Nawab of Arcot over the poligars and from the occasional resistance opposed by these feudatories to the authority of the state during periods of public calamity having rendered the interference of the British government requisite to supply so fruitful a source

80. Collector't Report on the Desposed Poligar of Udaiyarpalayam, Ariyalur and Turaiyur, 1816, pp. 1-2.

81. Military Consultations, 23 May, 1797, vol. 281 p. 3078.

of violence and destraction it was provided by the Treaty of 1792 that the poligars dependent on the Subedari of Arcot should be transferred to the exclusive authority of the British government. But the terms and conditions under which the arrangement was effected in 1792 proved incompetible with the objects of the policy on which it was founded. The substitution of a lenient and equal government for the irregular and arbitrary violence of the Mohammadan administration offered a feeble inducement to the poligars to abandon the habits of their feudal institution. The exact adherence to treaty on the part of the British government left the poligars the possession of their principalities on the conditional payment of a tribute utterly disproportionate to the extent of their resources. The means of super abundant wealth which under the government of the Nawabs had enabled the poligars to appease the resentment of the Mohammadan power and to expiate rebellion against the state by satisfying the rapacity of local o fficers became under the British administration a source of personal aggrandizement and ambition to the poligars. The limits of prudence and the degree of difference in the change of circumstances were indistinctly perceived under such flattering encouragement of those inflammatory passions and the poligars exhibited a practical example of the insufficient restraint imposed on the appetites of men by the claims of gratitude or by the hope of contentments in the enjoyment of limited good.[82] This report did not reflect the reality of the situation of the poligars but it did indicate the political ambitions of the English over the poligars. No wonder in 1795 Lord Robert Hobart, Governor of Madras, presented proposals to Umdut ul Umara for a modification of the existing settlement. He suggested that the Company should be entrusted with authority not only to collect revenue but also to reorganise the poligari system.[83] But the Nawab rejected the proposal, declaring that he would never deviate from the Treaty of 1792.[84] Inspite of this the English decided to ignore the Nawab's sovereignty and to suppress the poligars with a view to effect radical changes in the system.

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82. Letter from Madras Council to Board of Revenue, dated 4 June, 1803.
83. Military Consultations, 23 Oct. 1795, vol. 199 pp. 3747-3802.
84. Ibid 18 Dec. 1795, vol. 201 p. 4779.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST STRUGGLE

The existence of the poligari system appeared more and more incompatible with the growing strength of the English in South India. The two treaties of 1792—one of Srirangapatnam settled with the defeated Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the other of the Carnatic imposed upon the languished Mohammad Ali of Arcot-had a direct impact upon the relations of the auxiliary powers with the English. With the cesssion of Dindugal by Mysore, the chieftains of this region passed under the authority of the Company. The Nawab of Arcot transferred the poligars of the Carnatic to the administration of the Company in all matters of revenue. These settlements greatly contributed not only to the extension but also to the consolidation of the Company's control over the auxiliary powers of Tamilnadu. During the years that followed, the English frequently interfered in the palayams, made and unmade the poligars and sequestered several of their districts. The resultant conflict culminated in the outbreak of hostilities, triumph of the Company and the abolition of the poligari system.

After the annexation of Ramanathapuram in 1795 several other palayams shared its fate. In the same year Lakshmi Nayak of Manaparai was deprived of his possession.[1] The poligar of Palni by virtue of his status as the guardian of the famous temple on the hills commanded considerable influence but his district was taken over and he was imprisoned at the fort of Dindugal.[2] This was followed by the annexation of Yerrakottai and Mombarra.[3] In 1796 the Company occupied Yerrevadoo, Sankampatti and Madoor on the alleged ground

1. Board of Revenue, report, 31 Aug. 1795, vol. 2 p. 74.
2. Ibid, 10 Jan. 1796, vol. 2 p. 95.
3. Ibid, 28 Feb. 1707, vol. 2 pp. 165-9.

that the poligars of these districts had gone rash and contumacious.[4] Subsequently the administration of Saptore and Chennulgudi was assumed.[5] By 1795 the Company made it a policy to depirve the poligars of their traditional sources of strength and to destroy their influence. In their despatches dated the 10th of June 1795 and the 5th of June 1799 the Court of Directors issued instructions to their representatives in India that "all subordinate military establishments should be annihilated within the limits now subject to our dominion." They also directed the revision of the assessments 'more proportionate to the resources of the palayams and more adequate to the public demand for defraying the expenses.'[6] These military and financial measures implied the annihilation of the fundamental character of the poligari system. Harrassed by the Nawab and the Company, the poligars for long looked upon Mysore as a source of their strength. But in 1799 the English fought the Fourth Mysore War and killed Tipu Sultan. Not only did they destory the military might of Mysore but also impose a political settlement of great consequence. They enthroned a ruler of their choice-from the old Hindu royal family-in the state and carried into effect the identification of the political interests of Mysore with those of the British Empire. The success that attended these designs released the forces for operations against the poligars of Tamilnadu. These developments in short created a situation favourable for the enforcement of instructions of the Court of Directors. However the immediate factor that served as an excuse for proceeding with the destruction of the poligari system was the endeavour made by the eastern poligars of Tirunelveli to extend their influence at the expense of the interests of the Company during the Fourth Mysore War. Led by Vira Pandya Kattabomman, the poligar of Panjalamkurichi, they organised themselves into an alliance and committed depredations upon the territories of the Nawab and of the Company. This led them into conflict with the English.

Humiliation of Kattabomman

Born in 1761 and Telugu by descent, Vira Pandya Kattabomman became the poligar of Panjalamkurichi at the age of thirty on the death

4. Madurai District Records, 4 Aug. 1796, No. 1236.
5. Board of Revenue, 1 June 1797, Proceedings, vol. 178 p. 3057.
6. Court of Directors, Instructions, Revenue Consultations, 13 Aug. 1802, vol. 118 p. 2690.

of his father, Jagavira Pandya Kottabomman. He belonged to a house of chieftains, who resisted British power in the past, but did not appear to have entertained any such hostile designs against it. The Company's administrators, James Landon and Colin Jackson, had considered him as a man without education but of peaceful disposition.[7] While examining the events that led to his conflict with the Company, it should be noted that during this period, the collection of tribute served as a constant and potential source of friction. As already mentioned, the Nawab of Arcot exercised this right, but he granted it to the English under the provisions of the Carnatic Treaty of 1792. The difficulty that the Nawab encountered in the enforcement of this right and the design of the Company to exploit the opportunities presented by it for curbing the influence of the chieftains accounted for this change. In September 1798 as the tribute from Panjalamkurichi fell into arrears, Collector Jackson in his characteristic arrogance and rashness wrote letters to Vira Pandyan in a language of reprehension and remonstrance. Some scholars contend that he firmly rejected the British demand for payment of tribute. There is a tradition to indicate that Kattabomman declared : " It rains, the land yields, why should we pay tax to the English? ". The Kallar tribes of Melur and Natham encountered the alien rulers posing to them the same question. Perhaps Kattabomman too made this remark to the revenue servants, but there is no evidence to indicate that he acted upon it. Had he done so, he would have been rash, for he would have invited a certain doom, serving the purpose of the enemy without gaining any objective thereby..

By the 31st of May 1798 the total arrears of tribute from Panjalamkurichi stood at 3310 pagodas. The country experienced a severe drought, in consequence of which, the poligar found it difficult to collect taxes for payment of tribute.[8] Collector Jackson wanted to send an expedition to punish Vira Pandyan but the Madras administration did not agree. The Company already withdrew its forces from Tirunelveli, to be employed in the war against Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and did not desire to risk a conflict in the far south at this juncture. It directed the collector to summon the poligar to his

7. Revenue Consultations, Madras: 2 Oct. 1798, vol. 88 p. 3088.

8. Revenue Consultations, 27 Sep. 1798, vol. 88 p. 3084-3093.

cutcherry at Ramanathapuram.[9] Accordingly on the 18th of August 1798 Jackson despatched an order directing Vira Pandyan to attend his office at Ramanathapuram within two weeks. After sending the summons, the collector started on a tour of Tirunelveli. On the 27th of August when he reached Tirukuttalam, Kattabomman with his retinue waited for him, but the collector refused an interview.[10] In the words of Kattabomman: "I prepared money, for the payment of kist and when I intended to set out against my health, Mr. Jackson came to Tirukuttalam, which place I reached with the money in full for payment of the Company's kist."[11] When Jackson halted at Chokkampatti, Sivagiri, Settur and Srivalliputtur to receive tribute from the poligars, Vira Pandyan sought an interview but was told that he could meet the collector only at Ramanathapuram.[12] Despite this humiliation, so mortifying as it was, Kattabomman followed the Englishman for twenty three days on a journey of 400 miles through the latter's route and reached Ramanathapuram on the 19th September. An interview was granted the same day and the collector remarked that the poligar did well in obeying the orders, by which he probably saved himself from ruin. Upon a verification of accounts, Jackson was convinced that Kattabomman had cleared most of the arrears by the 31st of August, leaving only 1080 pagodas as balance. Denied of seats, the poligar and his minister Sivasubramania Pillai had to stand before the arrogant collector for three hours together. Still he did not permit them to leave the place, but directed them to stay inside the fort of Ramanathapuram. Now a few sepoys appeared, apparently to arrest the chief. Immediately the deaf and dumb brother of Vira Pandyan, Oomathurai, who was keeping a constant watch from an unnoticed corner spread an alarm among the followers, waiting nearby. While the poligar and his minister combining alarm with annoyance forced their way out, their followers rushed for their rescue.[13] At the gate of the fort there occurred a clash, in which some

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9. Ibid p. 3206.
10. Ibid pp. 3084-93.
11. Kattabomma Nayak, 25 Sept. 1799, letter to Lord Clive, translation, Revenue Consultations, Vol, 88 p. 3111.
12. Revenue Consultations, Sept. 1798, Vol. 81 py, 3111-13.
13. Board of Revenue, Consultations, 11 April 1799, Vol. 222 p. 3070. A pagoda was usually exchanged for three rupees.

people including Lieutenant Clarke were killed. Sivasubramania Pillai was taken prisoner but Kattabomman made his escape.[14] On their way to Panjalamkurichi the armed men of the poligar looted the bazaar at Ramanathapuram and carried off a rich booty.[15]

After his return to Panjalamkurichi Kottabomman wrote letters to Madras Council, attributing the scuffle at Ramanathapuram to the rashness of the collector and requesting the release of his minister.[16] Governor Edward Clive in the mean time issued a proclamation, inviting the poligar to submit to the authority of the Company. In the event of surrender he assured a fair investigation into the Ramanathapuram incident and in case of refusal he threatened the chief with serious displeasure of the government.[17] To remove all causes of suspicion and dissidence on the part of Vira Pandyan, he suspended Jackson from office and released Subramania Pillai from confinement.[18] In response to this gesture Kattabomman decided to submit. As a mark of it he paid a visit to the committee, with William Brown, William Oram and John Casmayor as members, appointed to enquire into the incident, at Ramanathapuram on the 15th of December, 1798.[19] The committee instituted an enquiry and in its report acquitted the poligar of the charges of rebellion and condemned the conduct of the collector. It asserted that there was no unnecessary delay on the part of the poligar in complying with the summons from the collector, but the manner in which he was forced to follow Jackson for twenty days through the territories of the inferior chieftains was indeed humiliating and that the rigour which attended the treatment meted out to him at Ramanathapuram had so much alarmed him for his personal safety, that he made his escape. However, as one of his pike-men in his service stabbed Clarke to death, the poligar was required to make a provision equal to the salary and allowance of the victim for the support of his family.[20] S. R. Lushington was now appointed

14. Revenue Consultations, 27 Sept. 1798, Vol. 88 pp. 3113-9.
15. J. F. Kearns, Panjalamcourchy Poligar and the State of Tirunelvelly (Church Mission Press, Palayamkottai, 1873)
16. Revenue Consultation, 20 Oct. 1798, Vol. 88 pp. 3111-8
17. Ibid, 13 Oct. 1798, Vol. 89 pp. 3213-4.
18. Ibid, 12 Oct. 1798, Vol. 89 pp. 3219-20.
19. Ibid, 21 Dec. 1798, Vol. 92 pp. 5417-7.
20. Ibid 21, Dec. 1798 Vol. 94 pp. 554-61.

Collector at Ramanathapuram in the place of Jackson, who was eventually dismissed from service.

The Poligar League

Thus the English removed the source of grievance of Kattabomman. The verdict of the Ramanathapuram Committee seemed as not unfair and the attitude of the Madras government appeared not unconciliatory. Yet in the background of the humiliation, that he suffered, the positive factors that led him to the path of defiance were the influence of Marudu Pandyan and the opportunity presented by the out break of the Fourth Mysore War. Marudu Pandyan of Sivaganga in close association with Gopala Nayak of Dindugal and Yadul Nayak of Anamalai was during this period engaged in the organisation of a South Indian confederacy of rebels against the British with the declared objective of liberating the country from the control of the 'low wretches', as he depicted the English in his Tiruchirapalli Proclamation.[21] The rebel missions that he sent to the southern regions visited Panjalamkurichi. In view of the identity of interests, this led to the establishment of close accociation between Kattabomman and Marudu Pandyan. Since then Vira Pandyan held frequent consultations with Marudu. On the 1st of June 1797 he, attended by 500 men, reached Palamaneri with the intention of proceeding to Sivaganga.[22] But collector Lushington, considering it as a step taken in contempt of British authority, conveyed his serious apprehension.[23] Therefore the poligar waited at Palamaneri for the arrival of the emissaries of Marudu. On the 5th a party reached the camp and the two groups held deliberations. Subsequently joined by 500 armed men of Sivaganga, Kattabomman returned to Panjalamkurichi. The details of the deliberations are not known, yet this meeting is indicative of the importance that the rebel leaders gave to mutual consultations.[24]

The employment of British forces against Mysore offered the needed opportunity to Kattabomman to strengthen his influence. No

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21. Tiruchirapalli Proclamation of Marudu Pandyan, Revenue Sundries 16 June, Vol. 26, pp 447-452
22. Board of Revenue Consultations, 10 June 1799, Vol. 229 pp. 4853-4.
23. Ibid, Vol. 229, pp . 4859.
24. Ibid, 10 June 1799, Vol. 229 pp. 4883 and page 4891.

difficult task faced him in attaining this end. The poligars of Nagalapuram, Mannarkottai, Powalli, Kolarpatti and Chennulgudi had already formed themselves into a combination due to the efforts of Marudu of Sivaganga and Melappan of Ramanathapuram and for asserting their right to collect taxes from certain villages in the Company's territory.[25] What Kattabomman proceeded to do was to join this league and to assume its leadership, by virtue of the influence he commanded and resources that he possessed. Determined to strengthen this league, he persuaded the chieftains of Saptore, Yezhayirampannai, Kadalgudi and Kulattoor to join it.[26] In August he sent Sevatiah, Vira Pandya Nayak and Virabhadra Pillai on a mission to Elavarasanur and won the alliance of the Kallans.[27] He sent Pandiah Pillai, brother of Sivasubramania Pillai, to Madras to gather and transmit intelligence about the British military movements[28] and placed guards at different places to watch the movements of the Europeans and their agents.[29]

The events now moved to a crisis. In August 1799 the son of the Poligar of Sivagiri and his adviser Mappila Vannian visited Panjalamkurichi and held consultations. Kattabomman decided to establish his influence in Sivagiri with the aid of the son of the Poligar, as the ruling chief refused to join the alliance of rebels. Added to this, as Panjalamkurichi, being situated in an open plain, appeared vulnerable to the hostile forces, the possession of an unassailable stronghold was considered an absolute necessity. The strategic location of the fort of Sivagiri at the foot of the Western Ghats and its formidable barriers around it rendered it eminently suited both for offensive and defensive operations in the event of any emergency. Major Gramme of the Company's army asserted that Kattabomman's "design in marching peons against Sivagiri is to get possession either by force or treachery that fort and a narrow Pass which leads to it, difficult of passage, where he hopes to stand his ground against the force which he fears

25. Ibid, 13 June 1799, Vol. 229, pp-4891.

26. Revenue Consultations, 6 Dec. 1799, Vol. 99 pp. 3321 & Board of Revenue Consultations Aug, 1799, Vol. 231, pp. 2905.

27. Ibid, Nov. 1799, Vol. 98, pp. 2716.

28. Ibid, Nov. 1799 Vol. 89, pp. 2716.

29. Ibid, 24 Sept. 1748, Vol. 88, pp. 3121-3.

naturally suggest to him to be sent to punish".[80] Thus in a bold attempt to strengthen his position an armed column consisting of the followers of Vira Pandyan, the son of the Poligar of Sivagiri and other allied chiefs, led by Delaway Kumaraswami Nayak, moved to the west. But as the Poligar of Sivagiri was a tributary to the Company, the Madras Council considered this expedition as a challenge to its own authority and ordered the army to march to Tirunelveli.[81]

An assessment of this development indicates that Kattabomman committed no serious offence against British authority as to provoke any violent reprisal. Though the Poligar of Sivagiri paid tribute to the Company, as required by the Carnatic Treaty of 1792, he was the subject of the Nawab and not of the Company As such the right of intervention in a conflict between the two subjects fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Nawab. Besides, the son of the Poligar of Sivagiri, as a member of the alliance, served as a party in this venture and no complaint was preferred by the father against his son. Inspite of these, the English decided on military operations against Kottabomman in disregard to the sovereignty of the Nawab. This was because the Company decided to utilise this opportunity to carry into effect the orders of the Court of Directors that "all subordinate military establishments should be annihilated within the limits now subject to our dominion".[82] This is confirmed by Governor General Lord Wellesley's instructions to Major Bannerman for military operations: "the rebellious conduct of Catabomanaig (Kattabomma Nayak), Poligar of Pandalamcourchy (Panjalamkurichi) having rendered it necessary to equip a military force for the purpose of suppressing the commotions excited by him, the Right Honourable Governor General has resolved to avail himself of this opportunity, to carry into effect the orders of the Honourable Court of Directors for disarming the whole of the Southern Poligars and for reducing those irregular chieftains to the authority of the civil government."[83] Thus the British attitude towards Vira Pandyan represented a difinite attempt

30. S. R. Lushington, 21 Aug. 1799, letter to Board of Revenue Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol. 231, pp. 6903-4.
31. Revenue Consultations, Sept. 1799, Vol. 97, pp. 2418-20.
32. Ibid, 13 Aug, 1802, Vol. 118, pp. 2690
33. J. Webbe, 19 Aug, 1799, Instruction to John Bannerman, Secret Sundries, Vol. 26 pp. 389-390.

to enforce an already formulated policy, aimed at the liquidation of the poligari system. The needed opportunity was presented by the termination of war with Mysore. The expedition ended in complete victory early in May 1799 and the Company now found it possible to send the forces to the far south.

Fall of Panjalamkurichi

In May 1799 Lord Wellesley issued orders from Madras for the advance of forces from Tiruchirapalli, Thanjavur and Madurai to Tirunelveli. The troops of the servile Rajah of Travancore joined the enemy.[34] Major Bannerman, armed with extensive powers for effectively dealing with the poligars, assumed the command of the expedition. Advancing through Ramanathapuram, the army encamped at Tirunelveli. On the 1st of September, 1799 the Major served an ultimatum directing Kattabomman to attend on him at Palayamkottai on the 4th.[35] The poligar replied: "As I am a person thinking to be ever submissive to the Honourable Company, and obey their orders, there is no hesitation to attend on you, and obey your commands, but there is no lucky Day at present, when there is, I will attend and obey your orders.....".[36] Bannerman considered this reply as evasive and decided on military action. As surprise was essential for a quick victory, the army by forced marches reached Panjalamkurichi on the 5th of September. Kattabomman's fort was an irregular parallelogram, 500 feet long and 300 feet broad. Constructed entirely of mud, it had square bastions and short curtains.[37]

Upon the arrival of the forces, they cut off the communications of the fort. A large body of peons rallied from the villages for the defence of the threatened citadel, but were repulsed and driven back with heavy loss. Ramalingam Mudaliar, whom Bannerman deputed to the fort with a massage asking for surrender—which Kattabomman rejected—gathered the secrets about the vulnerable points in the defences. He reported to the enemy that there had existed a wide

34. Military Consultations, 28 May, 1799, Vol. 253, pp. 3031.
35. Revenue Consultations, Sept, 1799, Vol. 98. p. 2704.
36. Kattabomman, 2nd Sept. 1799, palm leaf letter, trans, Revenue Consultations. Vol. 98, pp. 2706.
37. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. I p. 62.

breach in the bastion east of the main gate of the fort, that no preparation had been made to barricade the inner part of that gate and that the fort itself was guarded by only 1200 to 1500 men. On the basis of this report, which clearly suggested that Kattabomman anticipated no hostile move, Bannerman decided the strategy of operations.[38]

The plan of operation appeared well co-ordinated. The flank companies with a six pounder were ordered to blow up the south gate, field pieces to cover the storming party and a combined detachment of the Company, Ettayapuram and Travancore to attack the north face of the fort. The signal for assault being given, heavy cannonade broke open the gate. The storming party advanced with order and endeavoured to fight its way to the breach, but found itself unequal to the task. The troops of the Poligar, directed by the indomitable Oomathurai, held their ground and threw back the hostile columns. Restored to order the assailants made a more determined attack but were again defeated. So gallant was the resistance offered by the rebels that successive attacks were repeatedly repulsed.[39] The discomfiture of the enemy appeared unconvincing, for the peons of the Poligar appearing on any part of the wall were at once shot dead. But in the immediate defence of the breach, the rebels from their wonderfully concealed and sheltered enclaves wielded the sharp pikes and wrought havoc upon the enemy. Overwhelmed with melancholy recollections Bannerman wrote to Madras: "The attempt was persevered in so long as there was a shadow of success and never was Europen energy more gallantly displayed than by the officers on this unfortunate occasion.....".[40] In a bid to retrieve the tarmished prestige, the enemy ordered for the arrival of more troops. On the 6th reinforcements arrived from Palayamkottai. As the broken walls appeared vulnerable, the garrison evacuated and the parties took their course towards Kadalgudi.[41] In a clash at Kolarpatti, the fugitives suffered heavy casualty and Sivasubramania Pillai was taken prisoner. The British

38. Revenue Consultations, 22 Nov. 1799, Vol. 98, pp. 2777-85.
39. Panjalamkurichi Azhivu Charithira Kummi, leaves No. 82.-86 and Revenue Consultations, 8th Nov. 1799, vol.98, pp. 2706-11.
40. Bannerman, 5 Sept. 1799, Letter to J. Webbe, Rev. Consultations, vol.98 pp. 2713-8.
41. Revenue Consultations, 8 Nov. 1799, Vol. 98, pp. 2713-8.

forces followed up their victory with the reduction of Nagalapuram and other strongholds of the defiant chiefs to submission.[42] The troops employed by Vijaya Raghunatha Tondaiman, Rajah of Pudukkottai, captured Kattabomman from the jungles of Kalapore and handed him over to the enemy. He reported to Collector Lushington: on everyside in the mountains I had placed my people to find out the hiding place of Kattabomman. He, Oomathurai, his two brothers-in-law and three others were surrounded at Kalapore on the borders of Sivaganga and caught. When Kattabomman was seized, he wished to have slain himself, but my people having bound his hands kept him in confinement.[43] Upon the fall of the Poligar into the hands of the enemy his followers fled to Sivaganga and from there to the hills of Dindugal for taking service with Gopala Nayak and other rebel leaders.[44]

Execution of Kattabomman

Bannerman brought the prisoners to an assembly of the poligars and after a mockery of trial sentenced them to death. Soundara Pandyan of Nagalapuram was executed at Gopalapuram and Sivasubramania Pillai at Nagalapuram on the 13th of September.[45] On the 16th of October, Vira Pandyan was tried before an assembly of poligars, summoned at Kayattar. In an assertive tone and with a contempt for death he admitted the charges levelled against him. He declared that he sent his armed men against Sivagiri and that he engaged the British troops in battle at Panjalamkurichi. There upon Bannerman announced death penalty for Vira Pandyan. On the 17th of October, Kattabomman was hanged to death at a conspicuous spot near the old fort of Kayattar. About his last moments Bannerman wrote to Madras. "It may not be amiss here to observe that the manner and behaviour of the Poligar during the whole time of his being before those who were assembled yesterday at the examinations, which, took place, were undaunted and supercilious. He frequently eyed the Etiapore (Etlayapuram) Poligar, who had been so active in attempt-

42. Ibid, pp. 2724-33.
43. Tondaiman, 24th Sept. 1799, letter to Lushington, Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol. 235, pp. 8069-70.
44. Board of Revenue Consultations, 5th March, 1801, Vol. 275, p. 2553.
45. Revenue Consultations, 8th Nov. 1799, Vol. 98. pp. 2741-7.

ing to secure his person, and the poligar of Sivagiri with an appearance of indignant scorn, and when he went out to be executed, he walked with a firm add daring air and cast looks of sullen contempt on the Poligars to his right and left, as he passed. It was reported to me that in his way to the place of execution he expressed some anxiety for his dumb brother (Oomathurai) alone; and said, when he reached the foot of the Tree, on which he was hanged, that he then regretted having left his fort, in the defence of which it would have been better for him to have dead."

It cannot be denied that Vira Pandyan faced the last moments of his life with the pride of a hero. But the important question that is raised is whether he can be considered as a patriot. In examining this issue, it should be noted that during the early period of his confrontation with the English he was not definitely guided by any enlightened sense of patriotism. He made no attempt to gain the support of the common people against the alien power. On the other hand he alienated them by his policy of oppressive exactions and widespread spoliation. With the tribute in hand, he followed the Collector for twenty three days and exposed himself to humiliation. The resultant desire to retrieve his tarnished prestige would have turned him against the English. Despite this, his endeavour to identify his interests with those of the anti-British leagues organised by Marudu Pandyan and Gopala Nayak and his assumption of the leadership of the Poligar League of Tirunelveli furnishes indications of his transformation into a patriot. The second question that is raised is to what extent he can be regarded as a rebel. There is no evidence to suggest that he resisted British authority, except when the Company's forces attacked Panjalamkurichi. He did not refuse payment of tribute, did not even strengthen the defences of his fort and did not attack any British post. At the most what he did was to guard the frontiers of Panjalamkurichi and seek to establish his influence over Sivagiri, perhaps in preparation for a rebellion. Yet Lord Wellesley did consider his conduct as rebellious. What the English proceeded to do was to take advantage of this situation and to utilise the opportunity presented by the end of the war in Mysore to enforce their pre-determined policy of sequestration of the palayams and disarming of the poligars. To this extent he was less a rebel and more a victim of British machinations. If Panjalamkurichi bequeathed a tradition

as a citadel of resistance to British imperialism, it was much due to his more valiant brothers, Sevatiah and Oomathurai, who spearheaded a heroic struggle during the period that followed.

Reorganisation of the Poligari System

After the suppression of the eastern poligars of Tirunelveli the British administration took a series of measures, calculated to curb the influence of all the auxiliary powers. The relatives of Kattabomman including his brother Oomathurai were imprisoned at Palayamkottai.[46] The chieftains of Nagalapuram, Ezhayirampannai, Kolarpatti and Kulattoor were also placed in confinement at different places. The Poligar of Kadalgudi was at large.[47] The punishment of the rebel poligars was matched by the favours extended to the allied chieftains. Arangulam also called Sivajnanapuram belonging to Panjalamkurichi was given as reward to the chief of Ettayapuram in consideration of the valuable services he rendered.[48] The poligars of Maniachi and Mailmandai, the other allies of the Company, also received strips of territory from Panjalamkurichi and Kulattoor.[49] Governor Clive presented a horse and an ornamental attire to the Tondaiman of Pudukkottai in appreciation of the assistance he extended.[50]

Determined to punish the rebel poligars and to deter other chieftains from organising resistance, the Company decided to assume the direct administration of the districts of Kattabomman and his allies. Accordingly Panjalamkurichi, Yezhayirampannai, Nagalapuram, Kolarpatti, Kadalgudi and Kulattoor were sequestered. They should have been handed over to the Nawab by virtue of his sovereignty but it was not done.[51] The Company also assumed the military and watching duties so long performed by the poligars in different areas and the collection of deshakaval together with other established fees.[52] All the chieftains were required to dismantle their forts and to disband

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46. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, Vol.1 p. 51.
47. Revenue Consultations, 8 Nov. 1799, Vol. 98 pp. 2797-2804.
48. Ibid, 9 Nov. 1799, Vol.98, pp. 2948-9.
49. Ibid, 24 July 1801, Vol. 110, pp. 1379-80.
50. Ibid, 8 Nov. 1799, Vol.98 pp. 2796-7.
51. Ibid, 6. Nov. 1799, Vol.98 p. 2766.
52. Ibid, 9 Nov. 1800, Vol. 98 p. 2941.

their armed establishments.[53] The inhabitants themselves were subjected to serious restrictions. They were prohibited from carrying fire arms on pain of death and forced to surrender them without being compensated. The patels of the villages were held responsible against the manufacture of deadly weapons. Armies were posted at centres of disaffection and investigations were ordered into the economic resources of the palayams with a view to enhance the assessment.[54]

These radical reforms produced the most extensive changes in the affairs of the poligar country. The auxiliary powers were not only forced to dispense with their armed establishments but also subjected to increased assessment. Deprived of their political status they found themselves as down-graded into mere zamindars. Considering the frequent but futile attempts made so long to reduce these tributaries into submission and to curtail their spirit of independence and to introduce changes in the political system of South India to the anxiety of the Court of Directors, these measures seemed a great success. However the effect of these reforms proved only momentary and the apparent success vanished as a reaction came in its wake. The poligars were a class of rude warriors, habituated to arms and independence, of whom those of Tirunelveli were the hardiest and the bravest. They found that their leaders were either executed or condemned to ignominious imprisonment. The aliens established their imperial sway and subverted the traditional forms of government. The inhabitants were disarmed, their forts were razed to the ground and the deshakaval fees were to be paid to the alien masters. The palayams were thrown open to the ravages of the gangs of robbers who generally infested the hilly regions. The people were deprived of the means of repelling the predatory incursions of their hereditary enemies in the circar territories and of resisting the arbitrary demands of the parties claiming the authority of the Nawab, though these demands were generally supported by the force of arms. The British administration without taking any effective steps against these evils for affording protection to the inhabitants deprived them of their right of self defence. Such a crude policy evolved without due consideration of conditions of the country and enforced with vindictiveness against a

53. Ibid, 8 Nov. 1799, Vol. 99. p. 2864.

54. Revenue Despatches to England, 22 Jan. 1800, Vol. 7 p 21.

high spirited people reacted violenty. No wonder the short duration of calm was over taken by a violent storm and Oomathurai, a deaf and dumb man, emerged as the leader of the great struggle.

Escape of Oomathurai

In 1800 South India witnessed anti-British activity on an unprecedented scale. Greatly concerned at the extension of imperialism, liquidation of states and exploitation inherent in the alien administration, several leaders of prominence, particularly Marudu Pandyan of Sivaganga, Gopala Nayak of Dindugal, Kerala Varma of Malabar and Krishnappa Nayak and Dhoondaji Waug of Mysore through correspondence as well as missions organised themselves into a confederacy. They held a conspiracy at Virupakshi in Dindugal and rose in arms with an abortive assault on Coimbatore on the 3rd of June, 1800. The insurrection spread and outbreaks occurred in Ramanathapuram and Madurai. Before long the broken ranks of the poligars joined and swelled the rebel ranks. The rebellion became general and it spread to Tirunelveli with the escape of Oomathurai and other prisoners from Palayamkottai.

The relatives of Kattabomman, seventeen in number, condemned for perpetual imprisonment, were confined in a small enclosure in the fort of Palayamkottai. Rebels of consequence, they were kept in iron, rigidly guarded. Three of them died in ordeal, while the rest languished in prison. However on the 2nd of February 1801 by a clever strategem they made their escape. Among the escaped prisoners were Sevatiah and Kumaraswami Nayak, also called Oomathurai.

After the failure of an attempt made by Marudu Pandyan to work out the release of the prisoners, Oomathurai entered into a correspondence with the inhabitants of Panjalamkurichi. Potti Pakada, a servant employed for the collection of firewood for the prisoners, carried their letters written on palmyra leaves to the rebels, who met him in the nearby jungles. Through the exchange of letters the strategy was worked out. Accordingly in January 1801 a party of rebels numbering about 200 disguised as pilgrims going to Tiruchendur Temple started from Panjalamkurichi. Playing 'kavadi',[55] blowing

55. Kavadi is a wooden frame carrying the image or the weapon of Lord Subramania and taken on the devotee's shoulders to the shrine of the deity.

the conch shell, distributing holy ashes, receiving offerings and chanting spells, all reached Palayamkottai. On hearing the chanting of spells, the prisoners to their relief understood that the relieving party had arrived. As sellers of plantain leaves, fruits and firewood, the party now approached the gate of the fort.[56] Oomathurai in the mean time won the sympathy of the wife of the superintendent of the fort and secured permission to perform the ceremonies for the dead.[57] He offered to purchase the fruits, leaves and firewood for the same. The prices were settled and all the people were permitted to carry the loads into the fort. They excited no suspicion but they kept arms concealed inside the loads.[58] At the right moment the prisoners privately sent away their women, who were allowed to stay at liberty within the fort.[59] Large parties of insurgents, all well armed with country weapons lay in wait. They brought a few horses to provide quick means of escape to their imprisoned leaders. At the appointed hour soon after sun set on the 2nd of February 1801, the prisoners, on receiving the signal from Oomathurai and assisted by the parties, sprung forward. They disarmed the sentinels, overpowered the guard and got safely off. The quickness of the assault and the war cry raised by them took the troops by complete surprise. Joined by more columns of armed men on their way, the fugitives moved rapidly to the Walnaad Hills, near Panjalamkurichi.[60] The rebels annihilated the authority of the English, reoccupied Panjalamkurichi and proclaimed Sevatiah as the Poligar.[61] On receiving summons, the inhabitants rallied to their leaders, reconstructed the demolished forts and established themselves in strength.[62]

Renewal of Hostilities

Immediately 30,000 insurgents of Madurai and Ramanathapuram, sent by Marudu Pandyan, joined their comrades in Tirunelveli.[63] Large groups of Maravas, Nadars and Totiens voluntarily joined the

56. Panjalamkurichi Azhivu Charithira Kummi, leaves 158-165.
57. Military Consultations, 9 June 1801, vol. 284 pp. 4292-4.
58. Panjalamkurichi Azhivu Charithira Kummi, leaves 165-167.
59. Military Consultations, 10 Feb. 1801, vol. 279, p. 731.
60. Ibid, 10 Feb. 1801, Vol. 279, pp. 726-7.
61. Ibid, 1 Dec. 1801, Vol. 289, p. 2671.
62. Ibid, 10 Feb. 1801, vol. 279, pp. 733-4.
63. Ibid, 9 June 1801, vol. 284, p. 4295.

insurrection. The Paravas of the coast supplied wall pieces, powder and guns to the fighting men.[64] Pillaging parties led by Oomathurai surprised and subdued British military posts,[65] and by the end of February occupied all the territories extending from Panjalamkurichi to Srivaikuntam and Alwar Tirunagari.[66] In March they marched to Tutukudi, upon which the garrison consisting of the local sepoys voluntarily surrendered the fort.[67] After this victory, the rebels embarked upon an offensive to Ramanathapuram.[68]

Colin Macaulay, the Company's commanding officer at Tirunelveli, issued a proclamation warning the people of exemplary punishment, if they were found in arms or in rendering aid to the rebels.[69] Mobilising the entire disposable force of the district, he marched to Kadayanellore, six miles short of Panjalamkurichi. To their astonishment the troops found the fort, that was demolished in 1799, raised as it were by magic in six days and well manned by thousands of armed men. The insurgents foiled an attempt to capture the Pagoda of Ottapidaram and boldly appeared on the rear and flank of the enemy. Macaulay, for fear that his column would be cut off, ordered a humiliating retreat to Palayamkottai.[70]

While the rebels were gaining victories in various quarters, fresh troops of the Company poured into the far south. A formidable phalanx attacked the British camp at Pasuvantanai, but after losing ninety-six armed men, made its retreat.[71] On the 31st of March the British forces, led by Macaulay, launched an attack on Panjalamkurichi. With intrepid firmness the insurgents engaged the assailants in a fierce encounter. All the British troops who pressed their way to the walls were piked or shot dead. Successive attempts, made to surmount the resistance, ended in failure.[72] Greatly concerned at

64. Ibid, 10 February & 15 March 1801, vol. 279, p. 279, vol.280 p.148.
65. Ibid 23 February 1801, vol. 279, p. 988.
66. Ibid, 10 February & 15 March 1801, vol.291 p. 728, vol. 280, p. 1644.
67. Ibid, 11 March, 1801 & 13 April 1802, vol. 280, pp. 1469-72 Ibid, and vol. 296, pp. 2505-6.
68. '17 February 1801, vol. 279, p. 880.
69. Ibid 13 March 1801, vol. 280, pp. 1483-5.
70. Ibid, 17 February, vol. 279, pp. 886 893.
71. J. Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, vol. 1, (London, 1830) p. 61.
72. Secret Despatches to England, 2 May 1801, vol. 2., p. 81.

this humiliation, the enemy assembled a grand army at Kovilpatti and directed Adjutant General Agnew to take the command of the operations. On the 24th a practicable breach on the walls of Panjalamkurichi having been effected, hostile columns, supported by field pieces, advanced in strength. In the arduous contest that ensued, both parties suffered equally heavy losses. The insurgents continued their heroic resistance until all, who gathered in the breach, were shot dead by the enemy. The British troops emerged triumphant. Shortly after this decisive hour, the rebels numbering about 3,000 assembled on the eastern side of the fort, ran rapidly in eastern and northern directions, then formed into two columns and retreated, beset but not dismayed. They left 1050 of their compatriots dead. Agnew executed the imprisoned rebels near the fallen citadel. After this discomfiture, the insurgents evacuated all their strong-holds in Tirunelveli; most of them fled to the north' while the rest escaped to the hills of the west.[73]

Spread of the Rebellion

In May 1801 the rebellion spread to the northern provinces. Uniting themselves with every disaffected chief and drawing together all the inhabitants of their districts, Marudu Pandyan and his allies assembled a powerful force. They proclaimed Muttu Karuppa Tevar as the rebel ruler of Ramanathapuram[74] and reduced the forts of Tirupatore, Natham,[75] Melur and Tirunelur to submission.[76] Led by the chiefs, Melappan and Puttur, the insurgents established their sway over the Marawa territory.[77] In control of a long coast-line they employed large boats to bring supplies of grain, arms and ammunition from Ceylon and other territories through the port of Tondi.[78] In July Oomathurai commanded his followers to Palayanad in Madurai and captured it. The Kallar tribes occupied the western part of Madurai district. In June 1801 the insurrection spread to the Kaveri basin. The armed columns of Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram under the command of Shevatta Tambi, the son of Marudu Pandyan, marched

73. Military Consultations, 9 June 1801, vol. 284, pp. 4040-41.
74. Ibid, 1 December 1801, vol. 289, p. 7680.
75. Ibid, 1 June 1801, vol. 284, p. 3870.
76. Ibid, 7 July 1801, vol. 286, pp. 5047-8.
77. Ibid, 21 June 1801, vol. 285, p. 4603.
78. Ibid, 20 October 1801, vol. 288, p. 6857.

to Thanjavur.[79] With the peasants voluntarily rallying to their ranks, they occupied Pattukotai and established their posts at Arandangy and Adiarkudi.[80] They remained in force in the territory till the British operations from other quarters drove them to the defensive. The quick spread of the revolt over an extensive region took the English by surprise. All the rebels made a common cause against the English. Their unity of purpose rendered their resistance determined. Aimed at the harassment of the enemy, the insurgents cut off communications, destroyed forts, took shelter in thick jungles and depended on guerilla tactics. By their rapid and irregular movements they laid waste the entire country, but eluded the pursuit of regular troops with ease. The British forces could neither obtain provisions nor establish their posts in security. In consequence they found themselves constantly exposed to the assault by the rebels.[81]

In a bid to overcome these odds, the English gained the support of the princes, particularly the Tondaiman of Pudukkottai and the Rajah of Thanjavur and rushed in reinforcements, brought from Bengal and Malaya. They resumed operations on a large scale in May 1801. Agnew in consequence of his success in capturing a number of rebel strongholds checked the rising tempo of rebellion in Ramanathapuram and relieved Madurai city from threat of assault. A force under the command of Major James Graham marched from Tiruppuvanam to Madurai. The rebels in considerable strength attacked Graham, but another detachment under Major Sheppard reached to his rescue.[82] On the 11th of June the detachment of Agnew marching through Manamadurai and Partibanur, reoccupied Paramagudi. The armed bodies hovered round the English troops throughout their march. They cut a party to pieces at Tirupachetty and pressed vigorously on British lines, but withdrew after a clash in which seventy of them died. On the 10th near Manamadurai columns of rebels lined behind high banks, water-courses and jungles on the opposite bank of river Palamaneri. They made a dash across the river and charged the British troops with pikes. In the clashes that followed both sides suffered

79. Ibid 4 August 1801, vol. 286, pp. 5352-3.
80. Ibid, 11 August 1801, vol. 286, p. 5645.
81. Ibid, 2 June 1801, vol. 284. pp. 4340-1.
82. Ibid, 9 June 1801, vol. 284. pp. 4340-1.

considerable loss. Still the army continued its march and arrived at Ramanathapuram on the 14th of June.[83]

Leaving Ramanathapuram, Agnew reached Madurai on the 9th of July. On the 24th he stormed the rebel stronghold of Tirupatore and waited for the arrival of a detachment, led by Colonel Innes from Malabar.[84] After suppressing the rebels of Dindugal, Innes advanced towards Madurai. Reinforced, he attacked Piranmalai on the 18th of June, but was defeated. Retreating to Natham, he marched to Manapacherry on the 4th of July. But the columns led by the Marudu brothers pressed vigorously on his troops, again forcing his retreat to Natham. Subsequently taking the route through Piranmalai, Innes on the 25th arrived at Satturusankarakkottai. The next day while he was marching to Tirupatore through a thick wood, the rebels again attacked him using rockets, but was rescued by Agnew.[85] The combined forces of Agnew and Innes now reduced Okkur and attacked Siruwayal, the headquarters of the rebels of Sivaganga. After a futile resistance, the insurgents retired to the jungles.[86] Marching from Siruwayal, the British forces began operations against the rebel strongholds in the forests of Kalayarkoil. Driven to desperation, the patriots fought for every inch of land. Though the English succeeded in beating off the crowds every hour, they found themselves completely and constantly surrounded by hordes. As no alternative presented itself, Agnew retreated to Siruwayal and abandoned his project of advancing to Kalayarkoil from that direction.[87]

However the enemy gained more victories in Ramanathapuram and Thanjavur. Captain Blackburne, with the aid of the Rajah of Thanjavur, reoccupied the southern bank of the Kaveri. A detachment commanded by Lieutenant Maclean routed the rebels led by Puttur at Worior. In September Blackburne expelled the insurgents from Arandangy and desolated the villages of Terboinad. He proceeded within twenty miles of Siruwayal, then advancing eastward, detached a strong body to Ramanathapuram. Turning to the north he

83. Ibid, 21 June 1801, vol. 285. pp. 4550-5 & 4603-4.
84. Ibid, 4 August 1801, vol. 286, p-5367.
85. Ibid, 4 August 1801, vol. 286, pp. 5348-9, 5367-70.
86. James Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, vol.1, pp. 89-92.
87. Military Consultations, 20 October 1801, vol. 288, pp. 6837-9.

reached Karaikudi by the begining of October. About 3000 armed men led by Oomathurai marched against Maclean's troops but retreated After establishing a post near Karaikudi, Blackburne drove the rebels from the jungles of Singampunary[88] and cut off their communications with the coast. A gun boat, sent to the Bay of Tondi, destroyed the vessels employed by the patriots for the importation of grain and war materials. Meanwhile Martinz won a signal victory over the rebels near the fort of Ramanathapuram and Macaulay routed another body led by Melappan at Abiramam. Lieutenant Miller won a victory near Kamudi.[89] These gains, significant as they were, not only re-established Company's authority over Ramanathapuram, but bottled up the rebels in the forests of Kalayarkoil.

Fall of the Rebels

In September Agnew launched a second offensive against Kalayarkoil. On the 18th he reduced Piranmalai and taking his route through Melur, Singampunary and Nandikottai, arrived at Okkur. He captured the rebel posts at Vaniamkudi, Collumbom and Mutur in Sivaganga. On the 30th of September three detachments led by Innes, Blackburne and Macaulay made simultaneous thrusts on Kalayarkoil. After a smart fire on the 1st of October the defiant citadel fell to the enemy. The vanquished, led by Oomathurai and Sevatiah, fled to Dindugal while the rest followed Marudu Pandyan to the jungles of Singampunary.[90]

On the flight of the patriots the inhabitants of Dindugal rallied in strength. Within three days more than 4000 people joined Oomathurai and Sevatiah. They reoccupied the hills of Virupakshi, descended upon the valley of Dindugal and repulsed an attack by a detachment, commanded by Jones. As despatch seemed essential for curbing the growing influence of the rebels, Innes at the command of a well equipped detachment, rushed to Dindugal. Fighting was resumed on the 12th of October. The rebels headed by Oomathurai sought to intercept the progress of British forces at Virupakshi and subsequently

88. Ibid, 20 October 1801, vol. 288, pp. 6925-51 & 6970-3.
89. Revenue Consultations, 4 September 1801, vol. 110, pp. 1692-3 and Military Consultations, 20 October 1801, vol. 288, pp. 6861-2.
90. Ibid, 20 October 1801, vol. 288, pp, 6844-6936.

at Chetrampatty, but suffered reverses. Advancing through a thick wood, the English captured Cowdelli and the Corman Delli Barriers.[91] Hard pressed, Oomathurai again led his armed group to the valley of Dindugal. The enemy now reacted with vigour. In a running battle, which kept the insurgents constantly on foot without food, water and rest across a distance of fifty one miles from Dindugal to Vettilagundu for three days together, the exhausted rebels were finally overwhelmed.[92]

The principal rebels faced execution. Marudu Pandyan, the popular leader of the rebels, together with his gallant brother Vella Marudu, were executed on the ruins of the fort of Tirupatore on the 24th of October 1801.[93] The Poligar of Kadalgudi was put to death in October, while Gopala Nayak and the Poligar of Jallipatti, the influential chieftains of Dindugal, in November 1801.[94] Among the multitude who faced the same fate were Shevatta Tambi and Sivagnanam, the sons of Marudu Pandyan, Karutha Tambi and Molly Kutty Tambi, the sons of Vella Marudu, Muthuswamy, the young son of Shevatta Tambi and Muthu Karuppa Tever styled the Rajah of Ramanathapuram.[95] Oomathurai and Sevatiah were taken to Panjalamkurichi and beheaded on the 16th of November.[96] Seventy three of the principal rebels were condemned for perpetual banishment. Among them were Vengum Peria Wodaya Tevar of Sivaganga, Bomma Nayak of Verappur, Dalaway Kumaraswamy Nayak of Panjalamkurichi and Doraiswamy, the son of Marudu Pandyan.[97] On the 11th of February 1802 the prisoners on board 'Admiral Nelson', sailed from Tutukudi. The voyage, long and tedious, lasted for seventy six days. Kept under strict restraint and handcuffed with iron in pairs, the prisoners suffered miserably. In the course of the voyage two died of sickness and one was drowned. The rest of the prisoners, seventy in number, reached Penang on the 26th of April 1802. Soon after their arrival at the destination, one third of them fled in different directions.

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91. Ibid, 22 December 1801, vol. 290, p. 8080.
92. Ibid, 27 October 1801, vol. 288, p. 7108.
93. Military Despatches to England, 20 October 1802, vol. 33, p. 668.
94. Military Consultations, 22 Dec. 1801, vol. 290 pp. 8064 and 8101.
95. Military Consultations, 20 October 1801, vol. 288 pp. 6867-95
96. James Welsh, *Military Reminiscenoes*, vol. 1, pp. 133-134.
97. Military Consultations, 20 February 1802, vol. 293, p. 1318.

But their agony preyed upon them so much that twenty-one of them died within five months of banishment.[98] Nothing is known about the rest.

End of the Poligari System

So savage and extensive was the death and destruction wrought by the English, that the country was humbled and left in terror. The suppression of the Poligar Rebellion of 1799 and the South Indian Rebellion of 1801 resulted in the liquidation of the influence of the chieftains. The auxiliary powers were prevented from offering any further serious resistance in defence of their order. The sovereign rights of the Nawab came in the way so long to the implementation of the reforms, but this obstacle too was over come. On the death of Nawab Umdut-ul-Umara on the 15th of July 1801, his young son Ali Hussain ascended the throne. However a few days later he died under mysterious circumstances, amidst rumours that he was poisoned, subsequent to his refusal to surrender his territory as required by the Company. The Madras administration promptly elevated Azim ul Doula, son of Amir ul Umara, brother of Umdut ul Umara, to the throne on condition of his acceptance of a new settlement—for he had nothing to lose but every thing to gain. English recognized him as the Nawab of Arcot and granted him an allowance in return for the transfer of the administration of the territory. The Carnatic Treaty signed on the 31st of July 1801 ended the Nawab's rule and started the British administration. Enabled by these changes in its favour, the Company carried into effect the much contemplated political settlement of the poligar country.[99]

On the 1st of December, 1801 Edward Clive, the Governor of Madras, issued a proclamation, outlining the different features of the reform. It granted a general amnesty to all the surviving chieftains, who extended their support to the rebellion and promised to honour the rights of property, life, usages and customs of the inhabitants. It also announced the decision of the Company to abolish the poligari system and to introduce the zamindari system in its place. Also it indicated that the permanent assessment of revenue based upon zamin-

98. James Welsh, *Military Reminiscences*, vol. 1 pp. 201-2.

99. Secret Despatches to England, 3 Aug. 1801, vol. 2 pp. 92-107.

dari tenure would give due consideration to traditions and rights and would secure for the chieftains a peaceful possession of land under the operation of limited and definite laws, which would restrain the administrators from unnecessary interference.[100] Thus the decision to do away with the poligari system was coupled with an attempt to conciliate the wounded feelings of the poligars.

In consonance with this policy the palayams of Ramagiri, Ramanathapuram and Saptore were restored to the former ruling families on the basis of zamindari tenure. Mangaleswari Nauchiyar was given the possession of Ramanathapuram.[101] However no moderation was shown in the case of the palayams sequestered in 1799. Panjalamkurichi and the other palayams remained under the direct administration of the Company. As Panjalamkurichi appeared as a blot on the military prestige of the English, its name was expunged from all public records. The fort was for the second time dismantled and the entire site was ploughed as to leave no vestige of it.[102] More palayams were sequestered in 1801. They included Dhili, Mangalam, Periapatti, Jallipatti, Tondamattur and Somandori—all in Dindugal—Coimbatore region.[103] The loyal poligars too were made zamindars, but they were promised augmented security, favour and wealth. The Tondaiman of Pudukkottai was granted possession of Kilanelli from Thanjavur.[104]

Between 1801 and 1803 detailed investigations were instituted into the economic resources of the various palayams. By May 1803 the implementation of the zamindari system was completed and the poligars were transformed into a class of zamindars.[105] In their changed character, the chieftains were required to disband their armed establishments and to pay enhanced amount to the government under a permanent assessment. The magistrates were placed in charge of the kaval system. However the chieftains were permitted to retain a fixed

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100. Military Consultations, 1 Dec. 1801, vol. 289 pp. 7663-9.
101. Revenue Despatches to England, 9 May 1803, vol. 7 p. 528.
102. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 2 July 1801, vol. 289 p. 7707.
103. Report of the Board of Revenue, 10 Oct. 1801, vol. 3 p. 94.
104. Politlcal Consultation, 5 July 1083, vol· 10 pp. 833-34.
105. Revenue Despatches to England, 9 May 1852. vol. 7 pp. 454-6. 528-48.

number of peons carrying pikes so as to enable them to maintain those ceremonies of state, to which they had been accustomed for long. All the forts of the poligars were destroyed and periodical inspections were conducted so as to prevent the reconstruction of them as it happened in 1801.[106] The inhabitants were forced to surrender fire arms but compensation was granted unlike in 1799. The jungles in the poligar territories were cleared in order to deny advantages to the lingering rebel bands to regroup and resume the fighting. Military roads were constructed to the strategic areas and postal communications were extended to Kalayarkoil, Tirupatore, Piranmalai and Sankaranainarkoil. More troops were stationed in the centres of disaffection so as to overawe the inhabitants. These military measures were calculated to promote the consolidation of the British authority.[107] The poligari system that flourished for two and a half centuries came to a violent end in the midst of the suppression of their struggle for survival and implementation of the zamindari settlement.

106. Military Despatches to English, 29 May 1802, vol. 32 pp. 454-6.
107. Revenue Consultations, 25 Aug. 1802, vol. 118 p. 2881.

CONCLUSION

In times of war as well as of peace the poligars served as the second line in the polity of Tamilnadu from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. The nature of what they did varied from individual to individual and from period to period, depending partly upon their personal traits and partly the vicissitudes that they experienced in their fortunes. Frequently, the British administration had considered these chieftains as a class of marauding plunderers and lawless banditry.[1] It cannot be denied that there were criminal elements in all cross sections of society and the environment, unless they could not change it, made people bad. Generalisation on the basis of isolated instances and neglect of the context of developments are likely to lead to wrong conclusions. The inhabitants entertained a different view. In 1799 the villagers of Rajapalayam in Tirunelveli represented to the Madras Council that when the poligars exercised their jurisdiction, they protected the villages against governmental oppression and did justice to the peasants.[2] In the Coimbatore region a poligar levied no tax other than what he was required to pay as annual tribute. Whatever he needed for his household and establishment charges, he managed out of his income from personal lands.[3] In 1797 B. Hurdis, Collector of Salem, rightly asserted that ".....the character of the poligars, I do not conceive, to be fairly understood. The Europeans have received their impression from the amils of the Nawab of the Carnatic and have enquired no further. As they have been plundered by the administration, they have deemed it essential to plunder others; this does not

1. J. F. Kearns, Introduction to Panjalamkurichy Poligar and the State of Tinnevelly, 1873.
2. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 14 Jan. 1799, vol. 217, p. 374.
3. Ibid, 22 May 1797, vol. 178, p. 2921.

show their character, but their act. The poligars are called refractory and detachments moved against them to overcome their resistance by terror and when it is satisfied in its full extent, the instrument by which it was enforced was withdrawn. However no attempt was made to win their confidence; we understand from the official papers that demands were made for tribute; we hear the demands were refused and we hear that fire and sword exacted, what was demanded."[4]

In fact the poligars rendered manifold services, which the other agencies of state were incapable of doing or were neglecting to do during this period of frequent changes and shifting fortunes in the political system. The political as well as social functions that they performed contributed in a great deal to counter the evils of universal conflagration. The failure of the sovereign in the exercise of his jurisdiction and the worsening of the situation led to the steady expansion of the responsibility and authority of the auxiliary powers. Apart from their normal duties, many a chieftain promoted agriculture and trade and patronised religion and learning.

The poligars were required to deal with changing situations caused by the advent and exit of ruling powers. This caused them embarrassments. When the Nayaks organised the system, they expected the chieftains to serve them and to consider the invaders and rebels as common enemies. In accordance with this political as well as military obligations, they assisted the central authority when the forces of Bijapur, Mysore and Thanjavur made repeated incurisons into the Tamil country. Also they supported them for the suppression of the rebel powers like the Kallar tribes. As a result the relations of the auxiliary powers with the sovereign appeared remarkably smooth. Subsequently there came difficulties in quick snccession. The Mughals, the Nevayets, the Nizam and the Wallajahs sent frequent expeditions. Assisted by the poligars, the Nayaks seemed capable of combating the challenge. However what created complications were the internal dissension and civil war in the Nayak country. The quandary into which the chieftains were driven largely neutralised the power of resistance. Despite the emergence of the invaders as the ruling

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4. B. Hurdis, 4 May 1796, Letter to Board of Revenue, Proceeding of the Board' Vol. 178 pp. 2923-5.

authority, the chieftains in consonance with their loyalty and tradition continued their support to the fallen Nayaks. If they failed in their attempt to reinstate them in power on a firm basis it was because of the want of unity, absence of able leadership and weakness in warfare. However when the Marathas were in power in the country, they enjoyed an interlude of harmony with the central authority.

The establishment of the Wallajah dynasty synchronised with the outbreak of disorders on a large scale. The poligars utilised the opportunity to consolidate their influence. But when the Wallajahs gained ascendancy and consolidated their power, they concentrated their military pressure against the auxiliary powers. The chieftains were found allied with the Nayaks and remiss to pay tribute, as was demanded. The Nawab gained support of the English and made a limited progress in curbing the growing power of the poligars. But in the long run this policy recoiled upon the Nawab with disastrous effect. In the process of suppressing the auxiliary powers with alien assistance, he drifted into more and more of dependence upon the British and got himself entangled into burdensome liability and economic bankruptcy. More than these, he destroyed an alternative source of support in the event of his confrontation with the English. Habituated to arms and independence, the poligars were capable of supplying that martial energy, that was needed for combating foreign influence. In the process of alienating them the Wallajahs played into the hands of the imperialists.

Internal rebellions which broke out frequently presented odds as well as opportunities. The Nayaks, the Patans, Maphuz Khan and Khan Sahib defied the central authority and endeavoured to establish their independence. Because of the marches and counter marches of forces and the ravages of war, the chieftains together with the other inhabitants were reduced to trying situations. When they were confronted with internal disorders, neither did they follow a clear cut policy nor did they make a united stand. Carried away by opportunism and expediency, they allied with one side or the other and at times gained possession of more of villages. Yet generally they fought against each other and weakened themselves.

From the beginning the chieftains had no amicable relations with the English. This was the result of the internal contradictions created

by the alliance of the Company with the Nawab. So long the poligars rendered military service to the sovereign, but now the English stepped into their place. This development not only undermined the importance of the auxiliary powers but also prevented the possibility of a reconciliation of the Nawab with them. The English needed money for the prosecution of their aggressive wars and used the Nawab as an instrument for the exaction of contribution and presents quite arbitrarily. Emboldened by his alliance with the British arm, he reduced the chieftains to merciless ordeal. Further, when the Nawab ceased to be the defacto sovereign in consequence of his transformation into a political phantom, only the poligars, as the second line of defence, appeared capable of mobilising any formidable opposition. No wonder the English made it a policy to liquidate their influence. The proceeded in the name of the Nawab and ultimately in their own.

The poligars went down fighting against alien imperialism. Ultimately a combination of adverse developments rendered their fall inevitable. They were let down by their sovereign—the Nawab of the Carnatic. Not unfrequently they relied upon foreign support—of the French, the Dutch and the Mysoreans—for their survival. But the ascendancy of the English eclipsed these powers and the poligars could gain no assistance from any quarter. Irregular in their methods of war, the poligars were vanquished by the military might of the Company and its allies.

If the existence of the poligari system presented certain difficulties to the working of the central government, it equally so presented certain opportunities to the country. No doubt it appeared as a powerful agency of disintegration whenever the central authority could not assert itself, until one of the poligars established his ascendancy over the rest or an invader seized power. Yet as in England, the chieftains served as an effective barrier to autocracy and tyranny. The inhabitants in general found it beyond their reach to gain positions in the central administration as it was treated as a preserve of the ruling group. On the other hand the poligars as well as the village communities employed people in large number and extended to them a wide variety of opportunities for getting themselves trained in administration, as the Greek city states did. In the mean time the vast economic resources possessed by the poligars offered possibility of the

country making rapid economic progress in line with the principles of free enterprize. The martial talents and resources of these rude warriors, had they been properly canalised, would have shielded the independence of the couutry too. But the poligari system did not develop to its logical extent as the English nobility did. This was because the British imperialism distorted its working and prevented its progress.

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